THE INDIE ISSUE

billboard

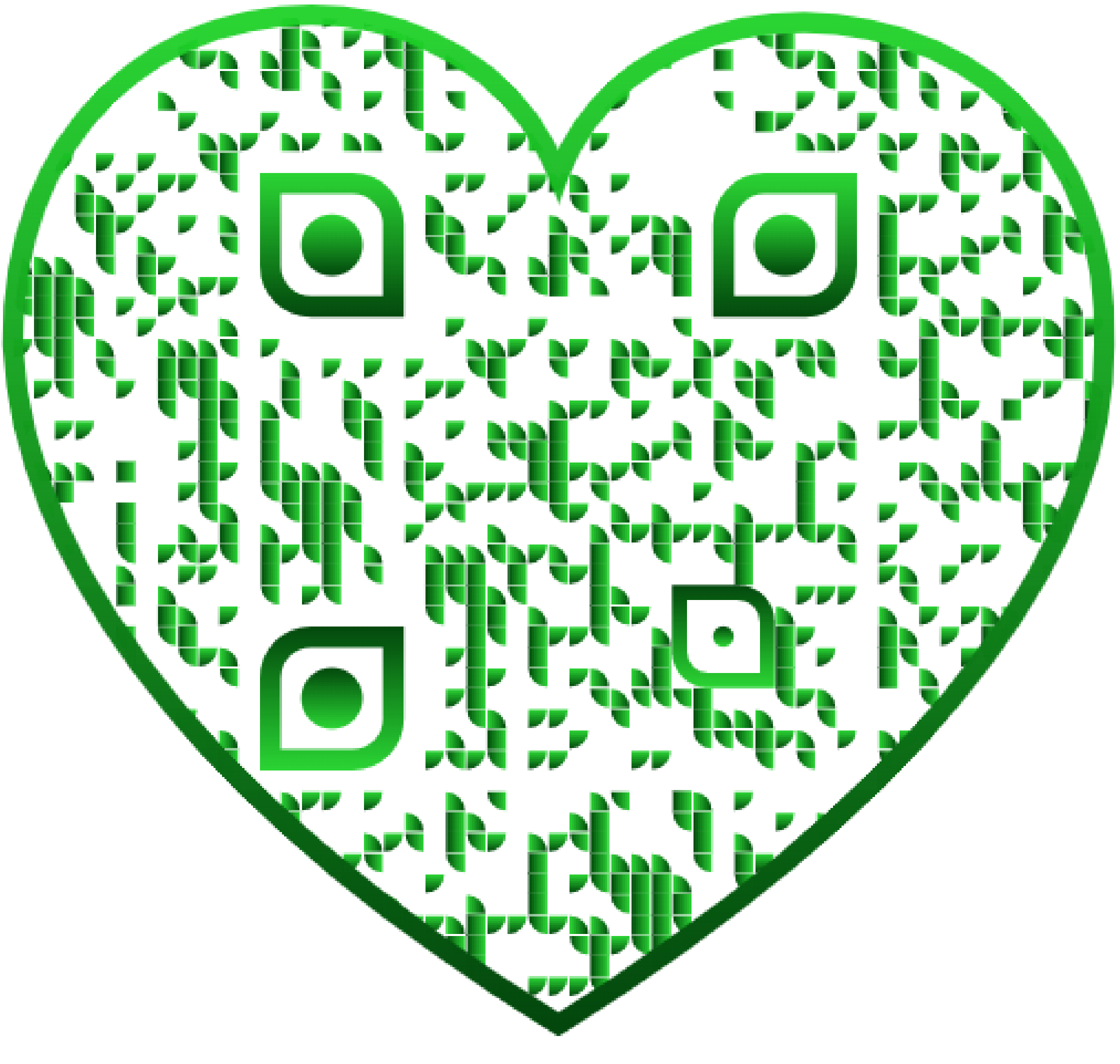
JUNE 8, 2024 • BILLBOARD.COM

+ THE POWER PLAYERS

— THE SECRETS TO INDIE SUCCESS FROM 22 TOP ARTISTS

INDIE STAR MAJOR MOVES

HOW **BRENT FAIYAZ** BECAME BIG BUSINESS



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NO. 9

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Brent Faiyaz photographed by Austin Hargrave on April 11 in Los Angeles.

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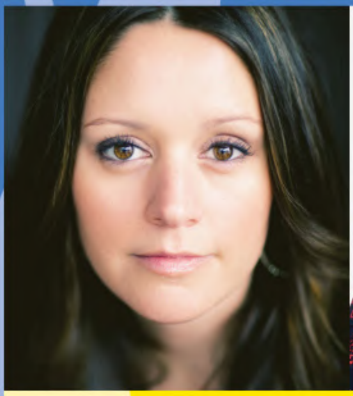
Billboard will publish its next issue on June 22. For 24/7 music coverage, go to billboard.com.



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DIANE WARREN

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Located in Ridgedale, Missouri, near Branson, Thunder Ridge Nature Arena offers stunning Ozark scenery and seamless architecture. This 20,000-capacity venue provides breathtaking views of Table Rock Lake and the Boston Mountains from every seat. Luxurious amenities include "The Veterans Tower," a 12-story luxury box with VIP suites and panoramic nature views.

It is described by its creator and visionary — noted conservationist and Bass Pro Shops founder Johnny Morris as a "gift of the Ozarks to the world."
It is the only venue on earth completely dedicated to conservation with all net proceeds from events going towards supporting conservation.

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ASM GLOBAL

GRAND OPENING SEASON

MAY 25
MORGAN WALLEN

JUNE 13
CHRIS STAPLETON

JULY 27
LUKE BRYAN

JULY 21
THE ROLLING STONES

AUG. 31
SLIGHTLY STOOPID

SEPT. 8
IMAGINE DRAGONS

SEPT. 21
PITBULL

OCT. 8
FUERZA REGIDA

I can't lose when I'm with you
How can I snooze and miss the moment?
You just too important
Nobody do body like you do

I can't lose when I'm with you
I can't just snooze and miss the moment
You just too important
Nobody do body like you do, you do

SZA

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2024 Songwriters Hall of Fame's Hal David Starlight Award

YOU WOULD HAVE WRITTEN BETTER COPY FOR THIS AD

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charts

DATA FOR WEEK OF 6.08.2024

COURTESY OF MERCURY RECORDS

BILLBOARD HOT 100

1

"I Had Some Help"
Post Malone
Featuring Morgan Wallen

LAST WEEK	PEAK POSITION	WEEKS ON CHART
1	1	3

Radio Amplifies Post Malone And Morgan Wallen's No. 1 Reign

OF THE POP ARTISTS who have entered the country realm, I believe Post Malone has perhaps made the biggest impact," says Tom Oakes, Summit-Media's Springfield, Mo., operations manager/program director of country station KTTS. "His respect for country music shows."

The singer-songwriter's breakthrough country hit, "I Had Some Help," featuring Morgan Wallen, logs a third total and consecutive week at No. 1 on the Billboard Hot 100. The song arrived as Post's sixth career leader and Wallen's second.

The collaboration drew 52.4 million all-format radio airplay audience impressions — up 24%, good for the chart's top Airplay Gainer award for a second week — May 24-30, according to Luminate.

The track jumps 9-5 in its fourth week on the Radio Songs chart, wrapping the fastest flight to the top five since Miley Cyrus' "Flowers" also needed only four weeks to reach the region in January/February 2023. "I Had Some Help" bounds 8-4 on Country Airplay, where it's Post's first entry as a lead artist, while concurrently rising 13-10 on Adult Top 40 and 15-14 on Mainstream Top 40.

"With the efforts made by Post, Beyoncé [with recent album *Cowboy Carter*] and others, it's a reflection of a shift in country music," Oakes says. "Our listeners are accepting of a wider spectrum of sounds. It's interesting to see what catches the listeners' ears and what falls flat. And with the pop artists' interest, entries from the Americana side from artists like Zach Bryan, plus impact from [country-themed TV] programs like *Yellowstone*, there's no doubt that country music continues to evolve as it always has."

—GARY TRUST AND JIM ASKER

Hot 100

2 WKS. AGO	LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	Title / PRODUCER (SONGWRITER)	Artist / IMPRINT/PROMOTION LABEL	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
1	1	1	**#1 for 3 WEEKS** **AIR** **I Had Some Help** L.BELL,CHARLIE HANDSOME,HOSKINS (A.R.POST,M.C.WALLEN,L.B.BELL,CHARLIE HANDSOME,E.K.SMITH, J.J.HOSKINS,C.P.WALTERS,A.G.GORLEY)	**Post Malone Featuring Morgan Wallen** MERCURY/REPUBLIC/BIG LOUD	1	3
2	2	2	**Not Like Us** MUSTARD,S.MOMBERGER (K.L.DUCKWORTH)	**Kendrick Lamar** PGLANG/INTERSCOPE/ICLG	1	4
3	3	3	**Million Dollar Baby** M.VOSSBERG,J.ROY,MANNYVELLI,SPARKHEEM,KAVI (T.RICHMAN)	**Tommy Richman** ISO SUPREMACY/PULSE RECORDS	2	5
4	4	4	**A Bar Song (Tipsy)** S.COOK,N.SASTRY (C.O.CHIBUEZE,S.C.COOK,N.SASTRY,J.JONES,J.A.KENT,M.A.WILLIAMS)	**Shaboozey** AMERICAN DOGWOOD/EMPIRE/MAGNOLIA MUSIC	3	7
9	6	5	**Espresso** J.BUNETTA (S.CARPENTER,J.C.BUNETTA,A.R.ALLEN,S.N.JONES)	**Sabrina Carpenter** ISLAND/REPUBLIC	4	7
HOT SHOT DEBUT		6	**Pink Skies** Z.L.BRYAN (Z.L.BRYAN)	**Zach Bryan** BELTING BRONCO/WARNER/WAR	6	1
6	7	7	**Lose Control** INFAMOUS,AMMO,J.BUNETTA (J.E.COLEMAN,J.C.BUNETTA,M.RODRIGUEZ-DIAZ,MIKKY EKKO,J.C.DIMSDALEY)	**Teddy Swims** SWIMS INT./WARNER	1	42
10	9	8	**Too Sweet** BEKON,PETE G,CHAKRA,A.HOZIER-BYRNE (A.HOZIER-BYRNE,D.TANNENBAUM,P.GONZALES, D.N.KRIEGER,S.A.GHEMAN,S.D.JOHNSON,T.R.MEHLENBACHER)	**Hozier** RUBYWORKS/COLUMBIA	1	10
5	8	9	**Beautiful Things** E.BLAIR (B.BOONE,E.BLAIR,J.L.LARSEN)	**Benson Boone** NIGHT STREET/WARNER	2	19
-	5	10	**Lunch** FINNEAS (B.E.O'CONNELL,F.B.O'CONNELL)	**Billie Eilish** DARKROOM/INTERSCOPE/ICLG	5	2
8	10	11	**Fortnight** J.M.ANTONOFF,T.SWIFT (T.SWIFT,J.M.ANTONOFF,A.R.POST)	**Taylor Swift Featuring Post Malone** REPUBLIC	1	6
-	13	12	**Birds Of A Feather** FINNEAS (B.E.O'CONNELL,F.B.O'CONNELL)	**Billie Eilish** DARKROOM/INTERSCOPE/ICLG	12	2
7	11	13	**Like That** METRO BOOMIN (N.D.WILBURN,L.T.WAYNE,K.L.DUCKWORTH,R.OLIVER,J.COOLEY,K.HOOD,A.TILMON JR.)	**Future, Metro Boomin & Kendrick Lamar** BOOMINATI/FREEBANDZ/REPUBLIC/EPIC	1	10
12	14	14	**Saturn** C.LANG,R.BISEL,SOLOMONOPHONIC,MONSUNE (S.I.ROWE,C.LANG,R.BISEL,J.SOLOMON,S.ZHANG)	**SZA** TOP DAWG/RCA	6	14
13	15	15	**SAL** **We Can't Be Friends (Wait For Your Love)** A.GRANDE,MAX MARTIN,ILYA (A.GRANDE,MAX MARTIN,I.SALMANZADEH)	**Ariana Grande** REPUBLIC	1	12
-	12	16	**Chihiro** FINNEAS (B.E.O'CONNELL,F.B.O'CONNELL)	**Billie Eilish** DARKROOM/INTERSCOPE/ICLG	12	2
15	20	17	**Stick Season** G.SIMON,N.KAHAN (N.KAHAN)	**Noah Kahan** MERCURY/REPUBLIC	9	35
18	19	18	**I Remember Everything** Z.L.BRYAN (Z.L.BRYAN,K.MUSGRAVES)	**Zach Bryan Featuring Kacey Musgraves** INTERSCOPE/BELTING BRONCO/WARNER/MCA NASHVILLE/WAR	1	40
17	21	19	**Lovin On Me** OZ,NIK D,S.MOMBERGER (J.T.HARLOW,O.YILDRIM,N.FRASCONA,S.MOMBERGER,N.J.PABON,D.M.GREER, R.NELTON)	**Jack Harlow** GENERATION NOW/ATLANTIC	1	29
31	27	20	**Cowgirls** J.MOI,J.DURRETT (R.H.BLOCK,A.G.GORLEY,J.MADDOCKS,E.K.SMITH,CHARLIE HANDSOME)	**Morgan Wallen Featuring ERNEST** BIG LOUD/MERCURY/REPUBLIC	20	24

Go to the Chart Beat section of billboard.com for complete charts coverage.

The 31-year-old Pittsburg, Texas, native's first Hot 100 entry has also reached No. 11 on Hot Country Songs.

GABE MUNIZ

HOT 100

52

"Sweet Dreams"
Koe Wetzel

How did "Sweet Dreams" come together?
We were in the studio writing a different song, and it was just kind of going nowhere. So we stepped back, like, "Do we want to go a different direction?" I wrote in my notes, probably two weeks prior, "It's hard to have sweet dreams when I'm such a nightmare." And we had a guitar lick that we had put together a couple days before on the road while touring. The song pretty much wrote itself — it came out quick and easy. We wanted it to have a little R&B feel, opposed to anything else that I've done before. It came out great.

The song has lyrical similarities of sleeplessness and self-medication to your last single. Do you pull from real-life experiences when writing?
Absolutely. We wrote those songs probably 24 hours apart from each other, so we were still in that mood. A lot of my songs come from personal experiences. [But] this song wasn't about a certain personal relationship or a past relationship. It was just multiple relationships, bouncing it off people who had had similar problems and then making it all come together, coming from different people's perspectives.

Your new album, *9 Lives*, is out in July. Is there anything fans can look forward to on it that they wouldn't expect?
We did an XXXTentacion cover of "Depression & Obsession" — it's going to be on the deluxe after the record comes out. He was one of my favorite underground rap artists, and I always like to throw something kind of left-field into my records. I put my own spin to it, and I'm really excited for people to hear it. I'm always trying to cross genres and blend as much as possible from all the different music that I listen to. Hopefully, there's something for everybody on this record.

—ANDREW UNTERBERGER

HOT 100 FIRST-TIMERS

Artists who have recently made their initial appearances on the chart

ARTIST	SONG	DEBUT POSITION	DEBUT DATE
Ashley Cooke	"Your Place"	95	June 8
Cash Cobain	"Attitude" with Don Toliver and Charlie Wilson	96	June 8

AIRPLAY, SALES AND STREAMING DATA COMPILED BY LUMINATE
BILLBOARD HOT 100: THE WEEK'S MOST POPULAR CURRENT SONGS ACROSS ALL GENRES, RANKED BY STREAMING ACTIVITY DATA BY ONLINE MUSIC SOURCES TRACKED BY LUMINATE, RADIO AIRPLAY AUDIENCE IMPRESSIONS AS MEASURED BY LUMINATE AND SALES DATA AS COMPILED BY LUMINATE. SEE CHARTS LEGEND ON BILLBOARD.COM FOR COMPLETE RULES AND EXPLANATIONS. © 2024 BILLBOARD MEDIA LLC AND LUMINATE INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

PARIS KIRK, ALBERT BRADLEY

BILLBOARD 200

16

Chappell Roan
The Rise and Fall of a Midwest Princess

The set hits the top 20 for the first time with its best week by equivalent album units (27,000; up 25% in the United States in the week ending May 30, according to Luminate) after a CD and vinyl restocking.

28

Wallows
Model

The band's first title to chart in the top 40 enters with its best week by units (21,000) and album sales (15,000). *Model* also debuts at No. 5 on Top Rock Albums, the act's first top five-charting set.

97

The Beach Boys
Sounds of Summer: The Very Best of The Beach Boys

The May 21 premiere of the Disney+ documentary *The Beach Boys* helps drive the album into the top 100 for the first time in nearly two years (with a unit gain of 33%).

3

Twenty One Pilots
Clancy

The duo Twenty One Pilots logs its fourth top 10-charting set on the Billboard 200 as *Clancy* enters at No. 3 with 143,000 equivalent album units earned in the United States in the week ending May 30, according to Luminate. Of that sum, album sales make up 113,000. (It's also No. 1 on Top Album Sales.) *Clancy* scores the biggest week by both units and album sales for any rock album in 2024. (Such titles are defined as those that are eligible for or have charted on Top Rock Albums.) With a No. 1 debut on Top Rock Albums as well, the act earns its fourth leader on the chart.

Clancy's sales were bolstered by the set's availability across 11 vinyl variants, signed and unsigned zine/CD journal editions and digipak CDs, deluxe CD box sets containing branded merchandise and a deluxe digital album with four bonus live tracks. —KEITH CAULFIELD

Billboard 200

2 WKS. AGO	LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	Artist / IMPRINT/DISTRIBUTING LABEL	Title	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
1	1	1	#1 for 6 WEEKS **Taylor Swift** / REPUBLIC	The Tortured Poets Department	1	6
-	2	2	**Billie Eilish** / DARKROOM/INTERSCOPE/ICLG	Hit Me Hard And Soft	2	2
HOT SHOT DEBUT		3	**Twenty One Pilots** / FUELED BY RAMEN/3EE	Clancy	3	1
3	3	4	**Morgan Wallen** / BIG LOUD/MERCURY/REPUBLIC	One Thing At A Time	1	65
NEW		5	**RM** / BIGHIT MUSIC/GEFFEN/ICLG	Right Place, Wrong Person	5	1
5	6	6	**Morgan Wallen** / BIG LOUD/REPUBLIC	Dangerous: The Double Album	1	177
4	5	7	**Future & Metro Boomin** / BOOMINATI/FREEBANDZ/REPUBLIC/EPIC	We Don't Trust You	1	10
2	4	8	**Gunna** / GUNNA/YOUNG STONER LIFE/300/3EE	One Of Wun	2	3
6	7	9	**Noah Kahan** / MERCURY/REPUBLIC	Stick Season	2	79
8	8	10	**Zach Bryan** / BELTING BRONCO/WARNER	Zach Bryan	1	40
7	9	11	**SZA** / TOP DAWG/RCA	SOS	1	77
11	11	12	**Zach Bryan** / BELTING BRONCO/WARNER	American Heartbreak	5	106
9	10	13	**Benson Boone** / NIGHT STREET/WARNER	Fireworks & Rollerblades	6	8
12	12	14	**Post Malone** / MERCURY/REPUBLIC	The Diamond Collection	12	28
13	14	15	**Taylor Swift** / REPUBLIC	Lover	1	249
28	28	16	GG **Chappell Roan** / KRA/AMUSEMENT/ISLAND/REPUBLIC	The Rise And Fall Of A Midwest Princess	16	10
NEW		17	**Sexyy Red** / REBEL/GAMMA.	In Sexyy We Trust	17	1
10	13	18	**Beyonce** / PARKWOOD/COLUMBIA	Cowboy Carter	1	9
14	16	19	**Ariana Grande** / REPUBLIC	Eternal Sunshine	1	12
27	23	20	**Luke Combs** / RIVER HOUSE/COLUMBIA NASHVILLE/SMN	This One's For You	4	365

SALES AND STREAMING DATA COMPILED BY LUMINATE

BILLBOARD 200: THE WEEK'S MOST POPULAR ALBUMS, BASED ON MULTIMETRIC CONSUMPTION, BLENDING TRADITIONAL ALBUM SALES, STREAMING-EQUIVALENT ALBUMS AND TRACK-EQUIVALENT ALBUMS, AS COMPILED BY LUMINATE. SEE CHARTS LEGEND ON BILLBOARD.COM FOR COMPLETE RULES AND EXPLANATIONS. © 2024 BILLBOARD MEDIA LLC AND LUMINATE INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

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DIANE WARREN

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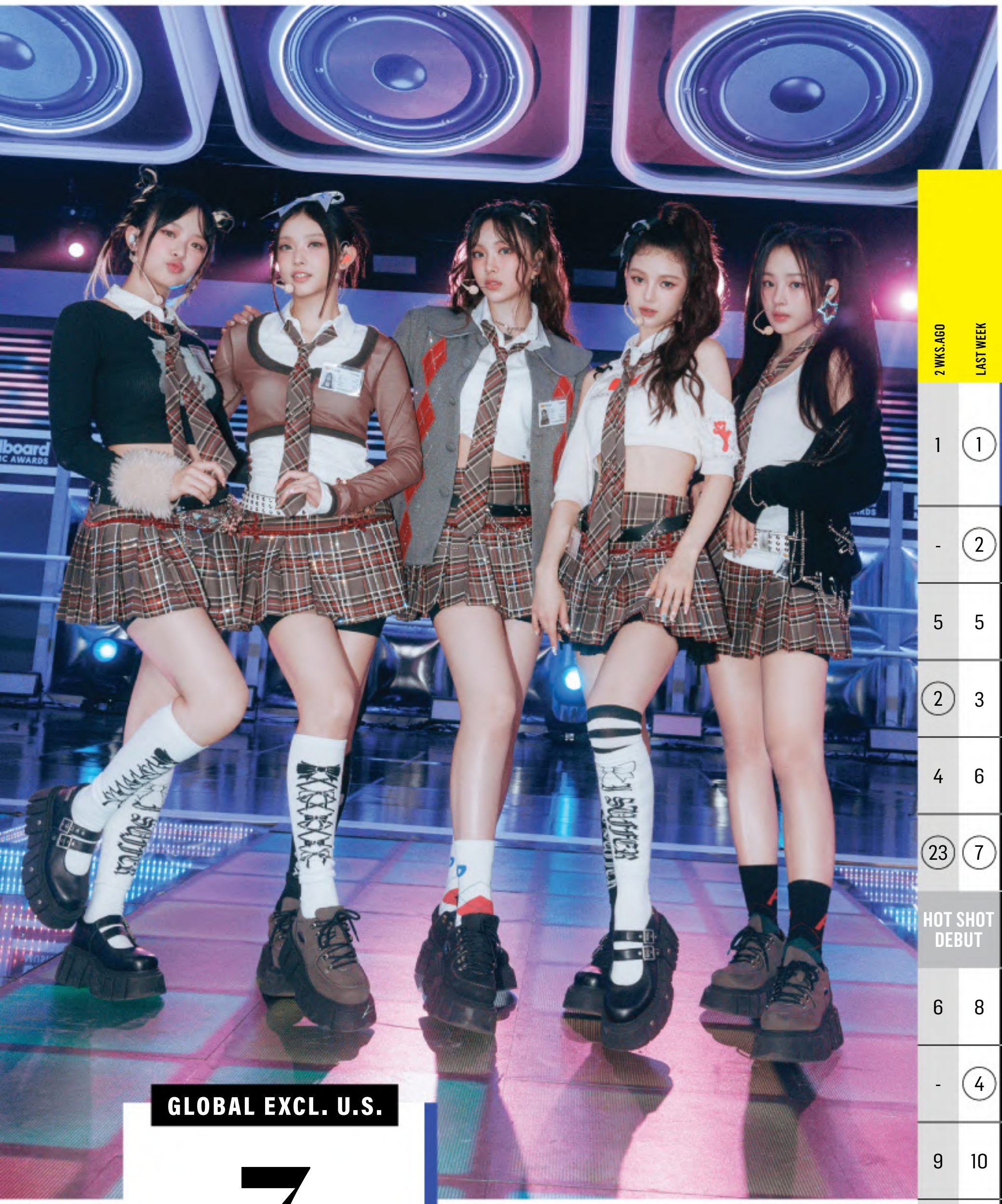
BMG



NAHEE PARK FOR PENSKE MEDIA

Global Excl. U.S.

2 WKS. AGO	LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	Title	Artist	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
1	1	1	#1 for 4 WEEKS Espresso	Sabrina Carpenter	1	7
-	2	2	Lunch	Billie Eilish	2	2
5	5	3	Gata Only	FloyyMenor X Cris Mj	3	17
2	3	4	Million Dollar Baby	Tommy Richman	2	5
4	6	5	Beautiful Things	Benson Boone	1	19
23	7	6	Supernova	aespa	6	3
HOT SHOT DEBUT		7	How Sweet	NewJeans	7	1
6	8	8	I Like The Way You Kiss Me	Artemas	1	10
-	4	9	Chihiro	Billie Eilish	4	2
9	10	10	Too Sweet	Hozier	5	10
-	9	11	Birds Of A Feather	Billie Eilish	9	2
8	13	12	Fortnight	Taylor Swift Featuring Post Malone	1	6
10	14	13	A Bar Song (Tipsy)	Shaboozey	10	6
7	12	14	Not Like Us	Kendrick Lamar	7	4
3	11	15	I Had Some Help	Post Malone Featuring Morgan Wallen	3	3
12	16	16	Lose Control	Teddy Swims	3	29
11	15	17	Magnetic	ILLIT	2	10
RE-ENTRY		18	Bubble Gum	NewJeans	18	2
13	20	19	We Can't Be Friends (Wait For Your Love)	Ariana Grande	1	12
NEW		20	BAND4BAND	Central Cee & Lil Baby	20	1

STREAMING AND SALES DATA COMPILED BY LUMINATE

BILLBOARD GLOBAL EXCL. U.S.: THE WEEK'S MOST POPULAR SONGS BASED ON STREAMING AND SALES ACTIVITY FROM OVER 200 TERRITORIES AROUND THE WORLD — EXCLUDING THE UNITED STATES — AS TRACKED BY LUMINATE. THE RANKING IS BASED ON A WEIGHTED FORMULA INCORPORATING OFFICIAL-ONLY STREAMS ON BOTH SUBSCRIPTION AND AD-SUPPORTED TIERS OF LEADING AUDIO AND VIDEO MUSIC SERVICES, PLUS DOWNLOAD SALES FROM TOP MUSIC RETAILERS ACROSS THE GLOBE. SEE CHARTS LEGEND ON BILLBOARD.COM FOR COMPLETE RULES AND EXPLANATIONS. © 2024 BILLBOARD MEDIA LLC AND LUMINATE INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

GLOBAL EXCL. U.S.

7

"How Sweet"
NewJeans

NEWJEANS' "HOW SWEET" debuts at No. 7 on the Billboard Global Excl. U.S. chart with 42.8 million streams and 5,000 sold outside the United States in the week ending May 30, according to Luminate. The song arrived May 24 along with the official release for "Bubble Gum," after the latter's music video premiered April 26. "Bubble Gum" debuted at No. 166 on the May 11 chart on the strength of views for its video and reenters at a new No. 18 high following its commercial release, with 25 million streams (up 735%) and 4,000 sold beyond the United States.

The South Korean quintet collects its fifth Global Excl. U.S. top 10 following its first four in 2023: "Super Shy" (No. 2 peak), "ETA," "Ditto" (both No. 4) and "OMG" (No. 7).

Elsewhere on the chart, "Band4Band" by London's Central Cee and Atlanta's Lil Baby launches at No. 20, marking each rapper's first entry on the Global Excl. U.S. chart in 2024. It starts with 30.1 million streams outside the United States. Central Cee adds his fifth top 20 hit, which follows his first two top 10s: "Too Much" with The Kid LAROI and Jung Kook (No. 10, November 2023) and "Sprinter" with Dave (No. 6, July 2023). Lil Baby lands his highest placement since he hit No. 4 in September 2021 as featured on Drake's "Girls Want Girls."

Plus, Toto's "Africa" enters at No. 195, up 3% to 9.8 million streams outside the United States. On the Billboard Global 200, it hits a new No. 174 high, with 13.9 million streams worldwide. The classic topped the Billboard Hot 100 for a week in February 1983 and has drawn 1.3 billion official U.S. streams.

—GARY TRUST

SONGWRITERS HALL OF FAME

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ARTIST 100

4

RM

WEEKS ON CHART

10

RM reenters the Artist 100 at a new peak of No. 4, concurrent with the arrival of his second Billboard 200 top 10: *Right Place, Wrong Person*. It debuts at No. 5 with 54,000 equivalent album units earned in the United States May 24-30, according to Luminate. The set also launches at No. 1 on Top Rap Albums, where it's the BTS member's first entry.

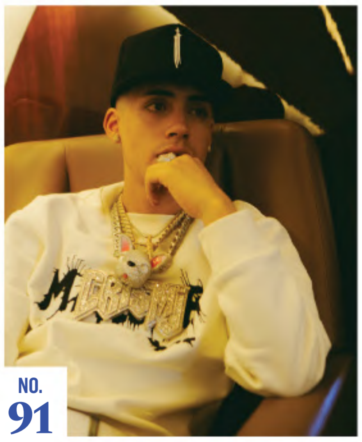
—KEITH CAULFIELD

NO. 27

Sexyy Red Rallies To New Peak

Rapper Sexyy Red springs 63-27 to a new best rank on the Artist 100, easily outdoing her previous high of No. 45. Her rise stems from the chart debut of her album *In Sexyy We Trust*, which opens at No. 5 on Top R&B/Hip-Hop Albums and No. 17 on the all-genre Billboard 200 — both personal bests, thanks to 27,000 equivalent album units earned. The album houses the single "Get It Sexyy," a No. 20-peaking Billboard Hot 100 hit, and her latest collaboration with Drake, "U My Everything," which starts at No. 44.

—TREVOR ANDERSON



NO. 91

Cris Mj's Artist 100 Debut

Cris Mj makes his first appearance on the Artist 100 at No. 91, as he adds a second top 10 on the Hot Latin Songs chart with "Si No Es Contigo" at No. 3 — just two positions behind his current leader, the eight-week No. 1 "Gata Only" with FloyyMenor. The former also enters at No. 72 on the Hot 100, Cris' highest debut of his three entries so far. His latest hit — a rhythmic track peppered with Middle Eastern sounds — is powered almost entirely by streaming activity, with 7.9 million official U.S. streams earned in the tracking week.

—PAMELA BUSTIOS

Artist 100

2 WKS. AGO	LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	Artist	IMPRINT/LABEL	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
1	1	1	#1 for 111 WEEKS **Taylor Swift**	REPUBLIC	1	514
RE-ENTRY		2	**Twenty One Pilots**	FUELED BY RAMEN/3EE	1	300
51	2	3	**Billie Eilish**	DARKROOM/INTERSCOPE/ICLG	1	293
RE-ENTRY		4	**RM**	BIGHIT MUSIC/GEFFEN/ICLG	4	10
3	3	5	**Morgan Wallen**	BIG LOUD/MERCURY/REPUBLIC	1	273
2	4	6	**Kendrick Lamar**	PGLANG/TOP DAWG/AFTERMATH/INTERSCOPE/ICLG	1	439
8	7	7	**Zach Bryan**	BELTING BRONCO/WARNER	1	107
6	5	8	**Luke Combs**	RIVER HOUSE/COLUMBIA NASHVILLE/SMN	1	378
4	6	9	**Post Malone**	MERCURY/REPUBLIC	1	414
7	8	10	**SZA**	TOP DAWG/RCA	1	248
14	11	11	**Shaboozey**	AMERICAN DOGWOOD/EMPIRE	9	7
17	10	12	**Sabrina Carpenter**	ISLAND/REPUBLIC	10	26
12	9	13	**Benson Boone**	NIGHT STREET/WARNER	6	19
18	15	14	**Jelly Roll**	BAILEE & BUDDY/BROKEN BOW/BMG/BBMG	4	98
9	14	15	**Hozier**	RUBYWORKS/COLUMBIA	3	123
15	12	16	**Teddy Swims**	SWIMS INT./WARNER	7	38
13	13	17	**Tommy Richman**	ISO SUPREMACY/PULSE RECORDS	13	5
22	16	18	**Chris Stapleton**	SOUND/MERCURY NASHVILLE/UMGN	1	449
10	17	19	**Dua Lipa**	WARNER	1	317
11	18	20	**Drake**	OVO SOUND/REPUBLIC	1	518

RM: COURTESY OF BIGHIT MUSIC. SEXYY RED: PRINCE WILLIAMS/WIREIMAGE. CRIS: DIEGO CASTRO.

AIRPLAY, SALES AND STREAMING DATA COMPILED BY LUMINATE

BILLBOARD ARTIST 100: THE WEEK'S MOST POPULAR ARTISTS ACROSS ALL GENRES, RANKED BY ALBUM AND TRACK SALES AS MEASURED BY LUMINATE, RADIO AIRPLAY AUDIENCE IMPRESSIONS AS MEASURED BY LUMINATE AND STREAMING ACTIVITY DATA FROM ONLINE MUSIC SOURCES TRACKED BY LUMINATE. SEE CHARTS LEGEND ON BILLBOARD.COM FOR COMPLETE RULES AND EXPLANATIONS. © 2024 BILLBOARD MEDIA LLC AND LUMINATE INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

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NO. 1

No Limit For Bryan's 'Skies'

Zach Bryan's "Pink Skies" debuts at No. 1 on Hot Rock & Alternative Songs with 31.6 million official U.S. streams, 166,000 in radio reach and 10,000 sold May 24-30, according to Luminate. The track is expected to introduce his upcoming project, believed to be titled *The Great American Bar Scene*.

Bryan adds his third leader on the list, after "I Remember Everything" (featuring Kacey Musgraves) reigned for 30 weeks beginning in September and "Something in the Orange" began 20 weeks atop the chart in February 2023.

"Pink Skies" also opens at No. 3 on Hot Country Songs, where it's Bryan's 10th top 10, and No. 6 on the Billboard Hot 100, where it's his third.

The singer-songwriter has notched three top 10 albums on the Billboard 200, all in the past two years: *American Heartbreak* (No. 5, June 2022), his eponymous full-length (No. 1 for two weeks, September 2023) and EP *Boys of Faith* (No. 8, October 2023). —KEVIN RUTHERFORD

Hot Rock & Alternative Songs

Last Week	This Week	Title / Imprint/Promotion Label	Artist	Wks. On Chart
HOT SHOT DEBUT	1	#1 for 1 WEEK **Pink Skies** BELTING BRONCO/WARNER	Zach Bryan	1
2	2	AIR **Too Sweet** RUBYWORKS/COLUMBIA	Hozier	10
1	3	**Lunch** DARKROOM/INTERSCOPE/ICLG	Billie Eilish	2
4	4	**Birds Of A Feather** DARKROOM/INTERSCOPE/ICLG	Billie Eilish	2
3	5	**Chihiro** DARKROOM/INTERSCOPE/ICLG	Billie Eilish	2
7	6	**I Remember Everything** BELTING BRONCO/WARNER	Zach Bryan Featuring Kacey Musgraves	40
5	7	**Wildflower** DARKROOM/INTERSCOPE/ICLG	Billie Eilish	2
8	8	**L'amour de Ma Vie** DARKROOM/INTERSCOPE/ICLG	Billie Eilish	2
13	9	**I Like The Way You Kiss Me** ARTEMAS/10K PROJECTS	Artemas	10
14	10	**End Of Beginning** DJO/AWAL	Djo	16

NO. 1

SZA Rings Up New No. 1

SZA scores her third Mainstream Top 40 No. 1 with "Saturn." She previously ruled the radio ranking with "Kill Bill" for a week in April 2023 and as a featured artist on Doja Cat's "Kiss Me More" for a week in July 2021.

"Saturn" arrived Feb. 23 after SZA teased it in a Mastercard commercial that aired during CBS' broadcast of the Grammy Awards on Feb. 4. The song, which she co-wrote, debuted at its No. 6 high on the all-genre, multimetric Billboard Hot 100 in March, becoming her 10th top 10. It has also led the multimetric Hot R&B Songs chart and the Rhythmic Airplay list, becoming her sixth No. 1 on each chart.

Meanwhile, "Saturn" shines as the first Mainstream Top 40 No. 1 with the name of a planet in its title. Train's "Drops of Jupiter (Tell Me)" previously rocketed highest (No. 4, 2001). —GARY TRUST

Mainstream Top 40

Last Week	This Week	Title / Imprint/Promotion Label	Artist	Wks. On Chart
3	1	#1 for 1 WEEK **Saturn** TOP DAWG/RCA	SZA	13
2	2	**Beautiful Things** NIGHT STREET/WARNER	Benson Boone	17
1	3	**We Can't Be Friends (Wait For Your Love)** REPUBLIC	Ariana Grande	12
5	4	GG **Too Sweet** RUBYWORKS/COLUMBIA	Hozier	8
4	5	**Lose Control** SWIMS INT./WARNER	Teddy Swims	28
9	6	**Espresso** ISLAND/REPUBLIC	Sabrina Carpenter	7
7	7	**Fortnight** REPUBLIC	Taylor Swift Featuring Post Malone	6
6	8	**Feather** ISLAND/REPUBLIC	Sabrina Carpenter	33
8	9	**Lovin On Me** GENERATION NOW/ATLANTIC	Jack Harlow	29
10	10	**Obsessed** GEFFEN/ICLG	Olivia Rodrigo	10

BRYAN: MINDY SMALL/GETTY IMAGES. SZA: ASTRIDA VALIGORSKY/WIREIMAGE.

AIRPLAY, SALES AND STREAMING DATA COMPILED BY LUMINATE

HOT ROCK & ALTERNATIVE SONGS: THE WEEK'S MOST POPULAR CURRENT ROCK AND ALTERNATIVE SONGS, RANKED BY STREAMING ACTIVITY DATA BY ONLINE MUSIC SOURCES TRACKED BY LUMINATE, RADIO AIRPLAY AUDIENCE IMPRESSIONS AS MEASURED BY MEDIABASE AND PROVIDED BY LUMINATE AND SALES DATA AS COMPILED BY LUMINATE. MAINSTREAM TOP 40: THE WEEK'S MOST POPULAR SONGS RANKED BY MAINSTREAM TOP 40 RADIO AIRPLAY DETECTIONS, AS MEASURED BY MEDIABASE AND PROVIDED BY LUMINATE. STATIONS ARE ELECTRONICALLY MONITORED 24 HOURS A DAY, SEVEN DAYS A WEEK. SEE CHARTS LEGEND ON BILLBOARD.COM FOR COMPLETE RULES AND EXPLANATIONS. © 2024 BILLBOARD MEDIA LLC AND LUMINATE INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

NO. 3

The GB By Gabito Ballesteros Bows

Ballesteros makes a strong debut across the *Billboard* charts as *The GB* launches at No. 3 on Regional Mexican Albums and No. 5 on Top Latin Albums. His debut full-length marks his first visit to any *Billboard* album list. It opens with 14,000 equivalent album units earned in the United States in the tracking week ending May 30, according to Luminate. Streams contribute most of the debut-week activity, which equates to 19.6 million official on-demand streams of *The GB*'s songs.

"Sin Yolanda" (with Peso Pluma) leads three entries from the album on the multimetric Hot Latin Songs chart, where it opens at No. 20, powered mostly by 3.1 million official U.S. streams. The set's No. 33-peaking "El Boss" (with Natanael Cano) rises 50-44 largely from 1.9 million streams, while "Lucky Charms" (with both Cano and Pluma) enters at No. 47 mostly from 1.8 million streams. —PAMELA BUSTIOS

Regional Mexican Albums

LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	Artist / IMPRINT/DISTRIBUTING LABEL	Title	WKS. ON CHART
1	1	#1 for 45 WEEKS **Peso Pluma** DOUBLE P	Genesis	50
2	2	**Fuerza Regida** STREET MOB/RANCHO HUMILDE/SONY MUSIC LATIN	Pa Las Baby's y Belikeada	32
NEW	3	**Gabito Ballesteros** LOS CT/INTERSCOPE/ICLG	The GB	1
3	4	**Junior H** RANCHO HUMILDE/WARNER LATINA	$ad Boyz 4 Life II	34
5	5	**Grupo Frontera** GRUPO FRONTERA	El Comienzo	44
4	6	**Fuerza Regida** STREET MOB/RANCHO HUMILDE/SONY MUSIC LATIN	Dolido Pero No Arrepentido (EP)	16
6	7	**Grupo Frontera** GRUPO FRONTERA	Jugando A Que No Pasa Nada	3
7	8	**Luis R Conriquez** KARTEL MUSIC	Corridos Belicos, Vol. IV	21
9	9	**Eslabon Armado** DEL	Desvelado	57
8	10	**Julion Alvarez** FONOVISA/UMLE	Presente	28

NO. 1

Josiah Queen Reigns

Queen's debut full-length, *The Prodigal*, enters Top Christian Albums at No. 1. Released May 24, it earned 4,000 equivalent album units in the United States through May 30, according to Luminate.

The set marks the first Top Christian Albums entry for the Tampa, Fla.-based 21-year-old. He initially accumulated traction by posting videos on TikTok, where he has nearly 100,000 followers.

"It has been surreal to see the response to my debut album," Queen says. "It's wild to me that these songs which I wrote in my living room and bedroom have made their way to people all over the world. My hope is that the album leads people closer to God."

Meanwhile, *The Prodigal*'s title track ranks at No. 7, after reaching a No. 4 high, on the multimetric Hot Christian Songs chart. It drew 2.2 million in airplay audience and 1.8 million official U.S. streams in the tracking week. —JIM ASKER

Top Christian Albums

LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	Artist / IMPRINT/DISTRIBUTING LABEL	Title	WKS. ON CHART
HOT SHOT DEBUT	1	#1 for 1 WEEK **Josiah Queen** JOSIAH QUEEN	The Prodigal	1
3	2	**Maverick City Music, Chandler Moore & Naomi Raine** TRIBL	The Mav Way: EP Vol. 1, The Maverick Way	8
4	3	**Elevation Worship** ELEVATION WORSHIP/PLG	Can You Imagine?	54
5	4	**Anne Wilson** MCA NASHVILLE/SPARROW/UMGN/CAPITOL CMG	Rebel	6
7	5	**Kanye West** G.O.O.D./DEF JAM	Donda	144
6	6	**Lauren Daigle** CENTRICITY/12TONE/WARNER	Look Up Child	299
8	7	**CeCe Winans** PURESPRINGS GOSPEL/FAIR TRADE	More Than This	5
9	8	**CeCe Winans** PURESPRINGS GOSPEL/FAIR TRADE	Believe For It: A Live Worship Experience	168
11	9	**Lauren Daigle** CENTRICITY/ATLANTIC/AG	Lauren Daigle	55
10	10	**Forrest Frank** RIVER HOUSE RECORDS/10K PROJECTS	God Is Good (EP)	7

BALLESTEROS: COURTESY OF LIVE NATION. QUEEN: CALEB QUEEN.

AIRPLAY, SALES AND STREAMING DATA COMPILED BY LUMINATE

REGIONAL MEXICAN ALBUMS: THE WEEK'S MOST POPULAR REGIONAL MEXICAN ALBUMS, BASED ON MULTIMETRIC CONSUMPTION, BLENDING TRADITIONAL ALBUM SALES, STREAMING-EQUIVALENT ALBUMS AND TRACK-EQUIVALENT ALBUMS, AS COMPILED BY LUMINATE. TOP CHRISTIAN ALBUMS: THE WEEK'S MOST POPULAR CHRISTIAN ALBUMS, BASED ON MULTIMETRIC CONSUMPTION, BLENDING TRADITIONAL ALBUM SALES, STREAMING-EQUIVALENT ALBUMS AND TRACK-EQUIVALENT ALBUMS, AS COMPILED BY LUMINATE. SEE CHARTS LEGEND ON BILLBOARD.COM FOR COMPLETE RULES AND EXPLANATIONS. © 2024 BILLBOARD MEDIA LLC AND LUMINATE INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

HILLARY LINDSEY

*Hillary, Congratulations on being inducted into the **Songwriters Hall of Fame!** I can think of no one that deserves it more than you. Thank you for sharing your incomparable talents with the world and for being my sister in this crazy music biz for so long! Love you!*

xoxo,
Carrie

Jesus, Take the Wheel
Wasted
Starts With Goodbye
So Small
Just A Dream
Get Out of This Town
Last Name
Twisted
Wheel Of the World
Someday, When I Stop Loving You
This Time
Unapologize
There's A Place for Us
Two Black Cadillacs
See You Again
Do You Think About Me
Forever Changed
Nobody Ever Told You
Thank God for Hometowns
Good In Goodbye
Leave Love Alone
Little Toy Guns
Keep Us Safe
Renegade Runaway
Dirty Laundry
Church Bells

51 RELEASED SONGS

30 RELEASED CO-WRITES TOGETHER

14 SINGLES

11 #1 COUNTRY SINGLES

10 ALBUMS

Smoke Break
Like I'll Never Love You Again
Chaser
Clock Don't Stop
The Girl You Think I Am
What I Never Knew I Always Wanted
Cry Pretty
Ghosts On The Stereo
Low
Backsliding
That Song That We Used to Make Love To
Spinning Bottles
End Up With You
Favorite Time of Year
Denim & Rhinestones
Velvet Heartbreak
Ghost Story
Hate My Heart
Burn
Faster
Pink Champagne
She Don't Know
Drunk And Hungover
Damage
Take Me Out

market

PG. 20 TECH'S BOOTLEG BLOODHOUNDS
PG. 22 THE TAO OF JAM BANDS
PG. 24 THE MANAGER BEHIND ICE SPICE

MUSIC AND MONEY

KYNCL: JON KOPALOFF/GETTY IMAGES

WMG Goes Window Shopping

After holding back its bid to acquire Believe, CEO Robert Kyncl is eyeing an alternative indie distributor to bolster ADA

BY ELIZABETH DILTS MARSHALL // ILLUSTRATION BY ANDREI COJOCARU

AFTER TAKING ITSELF OUT of the bidding for French music group and distributor Believe in April, Warner Music Group is shopping for an alternative distribution company that could help it gain market share in the competitive space that serves independent creators and labels, according to industry sources.

Since taking over as WMG's CEO last year, Robert Kyncl has signaled his intention to build in-house the technology and services he thinks the company needs. On a call with analysts in May, Kyncl said he's also ready to buy if the right opportunity presents itself.

"As part of our mission to be a destination for artists and songwriters at every stage of development, we are expanding our lower-touch services that many indie artists, labels and songwriters rely on," Kyncl said May 9. "We have a clear plan to develop this area of our ecosystem, and we're building solutions in-house while staying vigilant about [merger and acquisition] opportunities, which could accelerate our capabilities."

Among the companies that WMG is eyeing, according to sources, are leading independent distributors DistroKid and CD Baby. WMG is "active in the market" but is still in the exploratory stage, those sources say.

A WMG spokesman declined to comment for this story. A representative for Downtown, which owns CD Baby, also declined to comment, except to say that Downtown "is singularly focused on continuing to grow our business and support our clients' success." Representatives for DistroKid did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

WMG approached Paris-based Believe in February with a nonbinding offer to acquire it at a price of "at least" 17 euros ($18.60) per share. It ultimately decided not to submit a formal offer in April. Asked why the company did not pursue an offer for Believe, Kyncl said on the call it backed away "for a variety of reasons," including the brief amount of time given to conduct due diligence.

A source close to the company says Warner is now looking at acquisitions that are smaller in size and cost than Believe — a "bolt-on" acquisition deal that could help grow WMG's market share in the independent distribution and services business without affecting its overall profit margins.

Buying or building something that can leverage WMG's independent distribution and services division, ADA, would help the music company recruit more early-stage artists, something its executives consider core to their success.

WMG launched ADA in 1993, roughly 20 years

DMX's estate partnered with **Artist Legacy Group** as its exclusive global representative.

Elvis Presley's granddaughter won a court order blocking a foreclosure sale of **Graceland**, arguing the effort was fraudulent.

Apple launched a legal challenge against a $1.95 billion European Commission fine for unfairly favoring its streaming service over rivals.

The 10 remaining wrongful death lawsuits in the **Astroworld Festival** crowd crush case were settled.

before Sony bought a stake in The Orchard and Universal Music Group launched Caroline International as an indie-label distributor later rebranded as Virgin Music Group. And though WMG was the first major to carve out a presence serving the independent-artist market — renting its major-label services to indies, as industry sources have described it — competition in the market has heated up.

UMG and Sony have invested tens of millions in recent years buying rival startups in the space. A minority shareholder since 2006, UMG acquired Ingrooves in 2019. In 2022, UMG acquired Mtheory Artist Partnerships as well as a 49% stake in [PIAS]. Sony closed out its full acquisition of The Orchard in 2015 and then bought AWAL in 2022.

The Orchard now holds a commanding lead in the U.S. market with a 7.27% current market share, according to Luminate. UMG's Virgin Music Group, which comprises Ingrooves, Mtheory and Virgin Music Label & Artist Services, holds around 3.42% of the current market. ADA has a current market share of 1.68%. Its biggest client, BMG, which contributes 0.94% to ADA's current share, is winding down its distribution agreement.

WMG now needs to "turbocharge" this part of its business to capitalize on the fast-growing independent sector, says Fred Davis, partner at The Raine Group.

"The world now is divided into three categories of artists: those signed to major labels, those signed to indie labels and indie artists without a label," Davis says. "Distribution platforms are proving to be a viable source of A&R for the major labels."

Focusing WMG's A&R more on capturing opportunities, particularly in genres that are just beginning to experience growth, was one of Kyncl's top 2024 agenda items highlighted in a New Year's Day note he sent to all staff.

In April, WMG's publishing division, Warner Chappell Music, partnered with ReverbNation, BandLab Technologies' premium artist services platform, to identify and sign emerging songwriters. WCM administers music rights for any users who enroll in a new program through ReverbNation Publishing Administration, and signed songwriters gain access to WCM's services.

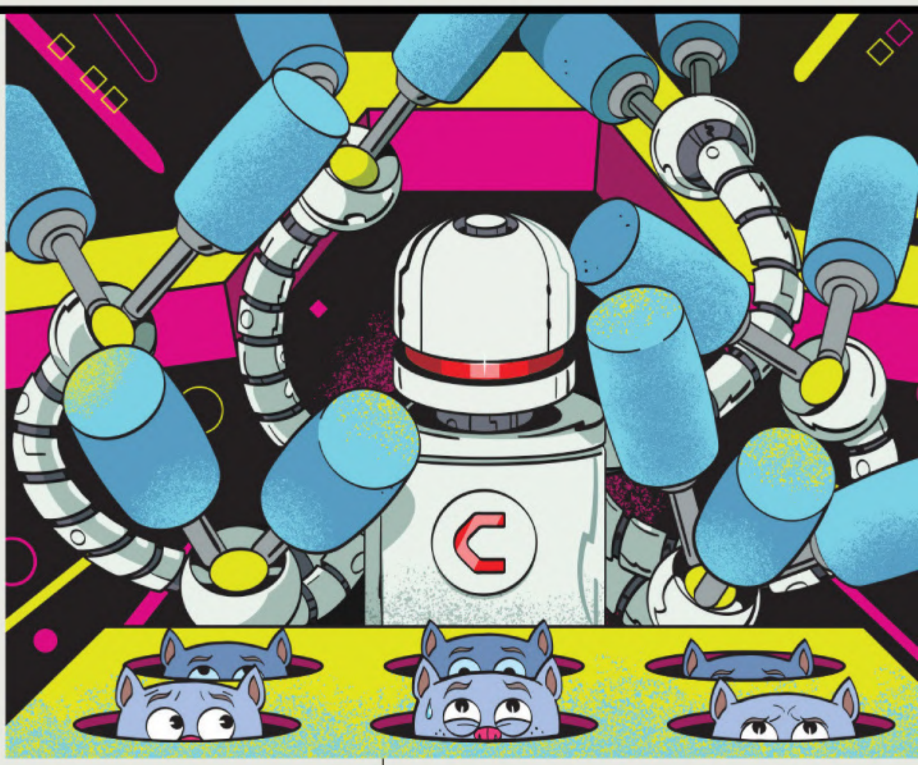
WMG has acquired majority stakes or launched joint ventures with a few distribution-oriented companies in recent years — some before Kyncl joined WMG — primarily in emerging markets in the Middle East and Asia. Among them: a majority stake in Africori, the leading digital music distribution, music rights management and artist development company in Africa, in January 2022. That March, it also acquired Qanawat Music, a leading distributor in the Middle East and North Africa.

Last year, WMG did two deals in India: It acquired a majority stake in Indian digital media company Divo and formed a joint venture with Sky Digital, which aggregates releases from Punjabi and Hindi labels.

While WMG has made acquisitions in other geographical regions, rival majors have bought companies serving the U.S. market for independents. "It would make sense for [WMG] to augment its distribution with an acquisition," says a source familiar with the company's strategy.

BEATING THE BOOTLEGGERS

Brand-protection companies Corsearch and CounterFind are using robust technology to stop the sale of unauthorized merch, music and tickets



ABOUT FOUR MONTHS AGO, *Maiden Voyage*, an album of Iron Maiden radio recordings from the 1980s, popped up for sale on Coda Records' website without the storied metal band's permission. Andrew Wyllie, Iron Maiden's head of business affairs, contacted the act's labels, BMG and Warner Music, for help persuading the U.K. retailer to pull down the unauthorized album — with, he says, no success. His next call went to Corsearch.

The 75-year-old brand-protection company, which fights bootleggers using artificial intelligence, image-matching software and automated takedown notices on retail sites like Amazon, Etsy and eBay, quickly ended the sale of *Maiden Voyage* and social media ads for it and was "more effective in getting those records taken down than our record company," Wyllie says. "They've definitely affected the bottom line."

For a long time, artists, managers, labels and merchandise companies have likened online bootleg sales to a game of Whac-A-Mole: When attorneys send cease-and-desist notices to unauthorized and knock-off merch retailers, the seller reemerges elsewhere. But in recent years, companies such as Corsearch and rival CounterFind have used more sophisticated methods to protect their music-business clients. They remove tens of thousands of online listings every month, hire regional attorneys to invoke the U.S. trademark statute known as the Lanham Act and prosecute violators.

"It's scientific, it's strategic and there are solutions," says Eric Cohen, founder of TZU Strategies, which collaborates with Corsearch and claims to have removed 55,000 counterfeit listings on behalf of top music stars. Using "robust" technology, he says, "we are able to connect a large majority of the counterfeiters that are using multiple accounts selling on multiple platforms in multiple ways."

Corsearch has 450 employees and 5,000 clients, including A-list artists and music companies. "We work with law enforcement we've had relationships with for 15 years," vp of enforcement Joe Cherayath says.

Dallas-based CounterFind is more of a "boutique" company, says co-founder and head of business development Rachel Aronson. In 2017, the founders were working with Linkin Park when frontman Chester Bennington died and, as Aronson recalls, "An insane amount of counterfeit merch was popping up all over the place." CounterFind removed "millions of dollars in counterfeit products from the market in one weekend," she says.

Since then, CounterFind has expanded to 30 employees and works with Bravado, the merch company owned by Universal Music Group (UMG) that represents Ariana Grande, Billie Eilish and dozens of other artists. "The majority of these major counterfeiters are working from their couches overseas and they're creating print-on-demand products," Aronson says.

Music bootlegging and counterfeiting is big business. Last year, U.S. Border and Customs Protection seized nearly $2.8 billion in copyright-infringing goods shipped from countries like China, Turkey and Canada. Jeff Jampol, whose company, JAM Inc., manages the estates of The Doors, Janis Joplin and others, estimates these unauthorized sellers cost artists roughly $20,000 to $50,000 for every $1 million in yearly T-shirt sales.

Bravado president Matt Young says CounterFind and UMG's in-house intellectual property protection team have been proactive, but "it still is like Whac-A-Mole."

Representatives for Corsearch and CounterFind disagree. Aronson describes a repeat offender who was "basically scraping and copying an artist's entire merch site" using a website address with one letter removed from the official URL. After months of reporting the bootlegger through its multiple hosting providers, CounterFind employed the Lanham Act to permanently remove the site and domain. In April, Corsearch worked with police in China to raid warehouses belonging to alleged online counterfeiter Pandabuy and seized millions of packages about to be shipped to customers. "The key point," Cherayath says, "is not to stop at cease-and-desist."

—STEVE KNOPPER

Photo by Becky Fluke

Congratulations to our friend and client Hillary Lindsey on her well-deserved induction into the Songwriters Hall of Fame. Your remarkable talent continues to inspire and shape the very soul of country music.

And don't just take our word for it …

"Hillary welcomed me into her writing room with open arms. She is one of the most talented and versatile human beings I've ever worked with. Every time I see Hillary Lindsey on my calendar I smile really big because I know we're gonna write a great song that day. She is a fearless songwriter, and the kindest, most down to earth woman I've ever met! Congrats Hillary, I love ya." – HARDY

"Twenty-five years ago, in a club, I witnessed the immense talent of Hillary Lindsey, and I was left speechless. Her voice, sense of melody, and lyrical genius mesmerized me then, and I feel the same today. She is one of our generation's most prolific songwriters, and my admiration for her extends beyond her musical gifts – she's a cherished friend, co-writer, collaborator, and an extraordinary human being. Congratulations, Hillary!"
– Karen Fairchild

"Hillary - my collaborator, my sister, and my friend. We all celebrate you and your beautiful creative spirit, as you claim your rightful place in the Songwriters Hall of Fame. Congratulations!" – Carrie Underwood

LOEB & LOEB LLP

CELEBRATING 1994 30 2024 IN NASHVILLE

HYBE sold a portion of its stake in **SM Entertainment** worth $50 million, or roughly 3% of the company.

Spotify announced that its **Car Thing** devices will stop working on Dec. 9.

Goose onstage at the 2023 Newport Folk Festival in Newport, R.I.

GENRE REPORT

TRUCKIN' LIKE THOSE DO-DA BANDS

Once unfashionable, jam bands like Phish and Goose are in demand at festivals and concert venues because their superfans buy lots of tickets and merchandise BY ELIAS LEIGHT

PETER SHAPIRO, THE OWNER OF *Relix* magazine, a chronicler of the jam band scene since the heyday of the Grateful Dead, traces the Big Bang of its current generation of acts back to the 1995 death of Dead frontman Jerry Garcia.

"Everyone saw the Dead; they were the No. 1 touring band in the 1990s," he says. "Garcia dies, and that audience of live music, improvisation-loving people, splinters. That creates the jam band scene. Phish lifts up" — the band first cracked Pollstar's highest-grossing U.S. tours list at the end of 1994 — "along with String Cheese Incident, Disco Biscuits [and] Medeski Martin & Wood."

The following year, Shapiro purchased the New York club Wetlands. "That was the home of the jam band, Dead scene in New York," he recalls. At the time, though, "it wasn't cool to be a Deadhead. And Wetlands wasn't necessarily the cool play."

But styles that one generation dismisses are often taken up by the next. Today, the industry, along with a wide variety of artists, is increasingly studying the jam band scene's creativity and homegrown cultivation of superfans.

While many acts in the space enjoy a robust live business, historically they were often ignored, if not scorned, by the mainstream music industry, in part because they didn't sell millions of albums or earn hundreds of millions of streams. Nick Stern, whose management client Karina Rykman is "jam-adjacent," contends the scene is "the most looked-down-upon genre in the music business." Yet, he says, it's "having a moment right now," with bands like Phish and Goose earning a steady number of co-signs from mainstream artists in recent years.

Vampire Weekend singer Ezra Koenig said in 2020 that jam titans Phish "are more inspiring, forward-thinking, exciting and talented than a lot of what was higher up in the cool hierarchy." Koenig and his band recently hopped onstage with Goose, the new arena-filling stars of the jam scene, to perform a 31-minute version of Vampire Weekend's "Cape Cod Kwassa Kwassa" at the Capitol Theatre in Port Chester, N.Y. Goose, which is the rare contemporary jam band that can claim radio airplay, has also performed with Father John Misty and Big Boi. And Maggie Rogers has performed with Dead & Company, which has toured with John Mayer on guitar since 2015.

"When those connections happen at the musician level, the industry as a whole starts to pay more attention and take it a little bit more seriously," says Dave DiCianni, who co-manages Goose along with other jam bands such as Eggy and Pigeons Playing Ping Pong. "It's cool to see it permeating into general pop culture."

On top of that, the streaming era has fostered more catholic tastes — as DiCianni puts it, "people's taste in music is less compartmentalized." Artists and managers in the scene also posit that their emphasis on being present in the moment with a like-minded community for an ever-changing live experience — Phish did not repeat a song during its 13 Baker's Dozen shows at New York's Madison Square Garden in 2017 — is an antidote to distracting, frenetic, nichified social media culture.

But there's another reason the mainstream music industry is increasingly interested in jam acts. "People outside the jam band space are coming to me almost in awe of the fandom in this scene," Goose co-manager Ben Baruch says.

In interviews over the last six months, many of the music industry's most powerful executives have repeatedly talked up the importance of cultivating "superfans." Ironically, jam bands have been doing this for decades — in part because they didn't get much support from the industry and had to develop their own ecosystems. (Baruch founded the management company 11E1even and the label No Coincidence Records, which has a deal with Secretly Distribution, to provide label services to many of the acts in the space.)

Devoted followers of jam bands are impressively diligent about attending shows, buying merchandise and streaming live performances, which change nightly. "What musician wouldn't want that level of die-hard fan?" asks Ethan Berlin, who is co-agent for Goose, Pigeons Playing Ping Pong and Rykman, among others.

Music festivals are posing a similar question. "You're seeing jam bands pop up on lineups that are maybe traditionally more indie rock or haven't really touched the jam thing in the past," DiCianni says. "On the promoter side of it, they know that these bands can move tickets for them."

While there is a recent wave of interest in the scene from artists outside of it, jam band fans have long had "ears that are a mile wide," according to Rykman, and have flexed their muscles to help propel some artists from adjacent worlds — such as bluegrass artist-guitarist Billy Strings — to greater heights.

Strings has played with Bill Kreutzmann (a founding member of the Dead), String Cheese Incident and Goose. Currently signed to Warner's Reprise Records, he won the Grammy Award for best bluegrass album in 2021, and his current tour includes several arena shows.

Berlin is also the agent for Khruangbin, a trio whose dreamy instrumental grooves sell 10,000 to 25,000 tickets per market; Berlin describes the act as "not quite jam, maybe not even jam-adjacent, but definitely jam-friendly." Notably, "they were embraced by that scene early in their career," he continues. "One of the first looks they had outside of Houston, where they're from, was when they were invited to play LOCKN' Festival [one of the leading jam gatherings] in 2016."

> **"People outside the jam band space are coming to me almost in awe of the fandom in this scene."**
>
> —BEN BARUCH, MANAGER

For Rykman, whose 2023 debut album featured guitar from Phish co-founder Trey Anastasio, this is one of "the beautiful things about the jam space." "Myself, Khruangbin, Vulfpeck, we're not jam bands with capital J's — none of us play two sets, and we still play three-minute songs," she continues. "But jam band fans were early" to signal appreciation for these "singular groovy organisms," helping them build formidable live businesses.

Some core jam bands are also enjoying a boost without high-profile collaborations. Another one of Baruch's management clients is Disco Biscuits. "This past year and a half, they're growing more than they have in 20 years," he says. "They're playing some multigenre festivals and connecting. We're starting to see crossover and growth from a lot of places."

DOUGLAS MASON/GETTY IMAGES

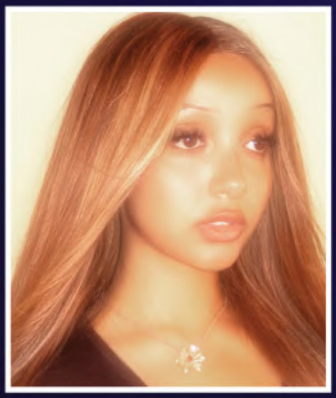
WELCOME TO THE ascap FAMILY...

JACK ANTONOFF

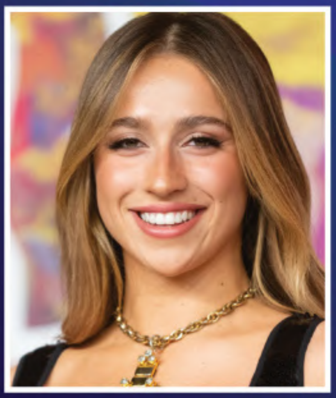
KACEY MUSGRAVES

JACK WHITE

TYLA


PINKPANTHERESS

JUSTIN TRANTER


TATE McRAE

30 SECONDS TO MARS
(SHANNON LETO & JARED LETO)

A COMMUNITY OF MUSIC CREATORS, ADVOCATES, EDUCATORS, INNOVATORS, TRUTH-TELLERS AND LEGENDS.

SONGWRITERS BELONG AT ASCAP.

Rosemond photographed Feb. 22 in Miami.

From The Desk Of... James Rosemond Jr.

FOUNDER/CEO, MASTERMIND ARTISTS

BY GAIL MITCHELL

PHOTOGRAPHED BY ALFONSO DURAN

ASKED TO recall his first musical memory, James Rosemond Jr. is quick to answer: R&B duo Groove Theory's 1995 R&B/pop classic, "Tell Me." He sings a snippet of the song's infectious refrain —"Tell me if you want me to..." — and says with a laugh, "I was 4 years old, but that's the way I fell in love with music."

Growing up, there was plenty of music to love. Rosemond, now 31, is the son of former artist manager Jimmy Rosemond, who represented Gucci Mane, The Game, Salt-N-Pepa and others. And over the past two years, he has blazed his own path in the profession, helping guide rapper Ice Spice to crossover stardom. Since breaking through in 2022 with the viral TikTok hit "Munch (Feelin' U)," Ice has garnered four Grammy Award nominations, and in 2023, she released four top 10 Billboard Hot 100 singles: "Princess Diana" with Nicki Minaj, "Boy's a Liar, Pt. 2" with PinkPantheress, "Karma" with Taylor Swift and "Barbie World" with Minaj and Aqua.

Ice is not Rosemond's sole client. His Miami-based Mastermind Artists also manages the young rapper's go-to producer, RIOTUSA, as well as DJ-producer Diablo, who works with Diplo. Former clients include Sean Kingston and songwriter Infrared (Fat Joe, French Montana). Prior to launching Mastermind 12 years ago, Rosemond honed his business skills while brokering publishing deals for songwriters and producers with Primary Wave Music CEO Larry Mestel and Ultra International Music Publishing founder Patrick Moxey.

Rosemond achieved these wins in the face of family upheaval. His father is serving life in prison after being convicted in 2013 of crimes tied to a cocaine-trafficking operation and in 2014 to the 2009 death of G-Unit affiliate Lowell "Lodi Mack" Fletcher.

Rosemond says he speaks to his father "all the time" and continues to receive "life advice" from him — "like what any father would give his young adult son in this world." As for business counsel, he adds, "Times change, and I don't think he understands streaming, TikTok and other data the way I do, so there's not much advice there."

That said, Rosemond came of age watching his father successfully navigate the music business and continues to use much of what he absorbed — especially "creative deal-making," he says. "Those conversations of how to negotiate and secure a deal, and what to look for in a deal. That always stuck with me."

He is using some of that advice as he conducts "strategic conversations" to strengthen the firm's infrastructure, including expanding into more musical genres. Meanwhile, he's busy preparing for Ice's debut studio album, *Y2K*, which is due later this year on 10K Projects/Capitol Records. The album has been teased by two singles: "Think U the Shit (Fart)" and the latest, "Gimmie the Light," which she performed at Coachella in April. Also stoking anticipation for the album: 50,000 MetroCards featuring Ice's image were recently made available in collaboration

Range Music promoted **Shaboozey** co-manager **Jared Cotter**, previously vp of A&R, to partner.

Jason Miller, CEO of the **CTS Eventim** joint venture **ELA**, exited the company.

A gold record plaque (left) for Ice Spice's "Munch" single, "the breakthrough that started it all," and a platinum plaque for "Boy's a Liar, Pt. 2," the record "that crossed us over to top 40," he says.

A painting of the iconic 1968 *Esquire* cover depicting Muhammad Ali as St. Sebastian. "The photo was shot during the Civil Rights movement and represents sacrifice. As a talent manager, that's the space I occupy," Rosemond says.

A "blur figure" of a $100 bill that friends at the Brooklyn art collective MSCHF gifted to Rosemond.

Gold camel souvenir from a vacation in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates: "Camels, known for their resilience and adaptability, also represent patience and determination."

with Capitol Records at four New York subway stations.

Rosemond says that kind of creative thinking keeps him excited about the music industry. "I love that it keeps me on my toes. I want to feel the challenge."

What was it like growing up with a parent who was such a force in the music industry?
It was definitely an eye-opener. I like to say to people that I live in dog years because of the information and experience that I was privy to early on — the lingo, the conversations and the behind-the-scenes scenarios that I was able to experience. I have to give credit to all of that for where I am today successwise.

What key lessons did you learn that you use today?
To really listen and never be a student. A lot of people come into this business quickly and feel like they know it all. No matter what artists my father represented, he still felt like a sponge; always learning new things. I carry that with me to this day.

How has being Jimmy Rosemond's son affected the way people in the industry deal with you?
I would say that a lot of veterans look out for each other in the way that peers look out for each other. That has always been the spirit in the music industry. There hasn't been much of a difference between my father being home and not being home.

How did you get into brokering publishing deals?
I always found myself in the same circle as songwriters and producers, who had income or pipeline hits and needed help. And through my relationships with Larry and Patrick — and having a good lawyer by my side — I was able to connect the dots. It's also how I was able to kick off my company.

Did that prompt your pivot into artist management?
Yes, because I'm a nerd when it comes to business, especially the deal-making. Outside of the day-to-day with an artist, it's about brokering amazing deals for artists; helping them really understand the difference in what they have versus what others have and then having them see the value of what I can bring to the table. I get high on that.

What was it about Ice Spice, your first female client, that caught your ear?
It was her tone and the production she was picking. When I came across her early on, she only had about two or three songs out. She didn't have the crazy monthly listeners and social numbers. Then I came across a song called "No Clarity," a drill flip of Zedd's "Clarity," and heard the song's possibilities. Next, I heard "Name of Love." One, she's working with the same producer [RIOTUSA] and they're creating a sound. Two, her tone, and three, they're flipping these crossover samples in drills. That got me. Then I saw her image — the curls, which was different — and I'm like, "Whoa!"

Talk about the marketing strategy behind Ice Spice with Dunkin' and New York's subway system.
Coming out of the gate, it was always three-dimensional chess. "Less is more" was our conversation and "Let's not saturate." Strategically, it was also about digital. When we put "Munch" out, we got the right digital team, which was Create Music Group. Its sister companies include WorldStar and Genius. I never want to feel like an artist is on a treadmill. I always want them to feel like they're moving forward from A to C, C to E. So I did a strategic play on the digital side to accelerate her growth, social and in the market. "Munch" was everywhere that first week we put it out. And that was due to the strategic play that I was able to put together using the song as currency.

That led to Dunkin'?
Yes. When that opportunity came to us, it was a no-brainer because her fan base is called Munchkins. We always like to tap into social media and see what people are thinking or talking about. It's not like we're coming in and saying, "Yo, we should do Dunkin'." It's coming up with the idea because we're hearing the conversations about what fans want to see. It's there; we're just listening.

How did you enable her to retain her masters?
It was really about giving her all the right information. Like, this is where the market is going. It's about independence. It's about retaining ownership; about intellectual property and generational wealth. That sometimes there are sacrifices — that people may be dangling money. But if you want a certain type of deal, you have to be patient as we do the work to have leverage. That was the conversation early on. And thank God she listened and was able to hold out while we kept running up the numbers on "Munch." Then it became, "Let's entertain these deals" and, as I said earlier, begin to shape one in a creative way. Now, she not only retains her masters but also her publishing rights and still gets upfront money as if she's a work for hire. It's a hybrid type of deal that you don't see often. And it comes with doing the work, having patience and creating leverage.

In the wake of major-label restructuring and shrinking promotion departments, is radio still important?
Absolutely. I tell my clients, "Streaming is the club, radio is VIP." We want to get into the club and we want to get into the VIP section. And radio still feels somewhat exclusive. People are still driving and listening to the radio. And it's not only about an artist breaking through. Once again, there's the economics of it. If you have a publishing deal, one important factor is radio airplay. So why wouldn't you want to have music on the radio?

Is there one thing you always tell a new client up front?
That economics is always going to play its part. That's No. 1. Artists come in with big expectations like wanting the luxurious stuff. To keep them grounded on that front, I always remind them that it's about profit and loss. So the more money they spend, they've got to crank out hits to make sure labels and publishers will want to continue to spend money on them.

BMI POP AWARDS 2024

PRESIDENT'S AWARD

benny blanco

SONG OF THE YEAR

FLOWERS

Miley Cyrus
Gregory "Aldae" Hein
Michael Pollack

Concord / Droog Publishing / MCEO Publishing
Songs By Gregory Hein / Songs With A Pure Tone
Sony/ATV Songs LLC / These Are Pulse Songs
Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp.
What Key Do You Want It In Music
Wide Eyed Global

SONGWRITER OF THE YEAR

TAYLOR SWIFT

Anti-Hero / Bejeweled / Cruel Summer
Karma / Lavender Haze / Maroon
Midnight Rain / Snow on the Beach
Vigilante Shit / You're on Your Own, Kid

PUBLISHER OF THE YEAR

SONY MUSIC PUBLISHING

10:35
TATE MCRAE (SOCAN)
Sony/ATV Songs LLC

ANTI-HERO
JACK ANTONOFF
TAYLOR SWIFT
Ducky Donath Music / Songs of Universal, Inc.
Sony/ATV Songs LLC / TASRM Publishing

BABY DON'T HURT ME
ANNE-MARIE (PRS)
FELI FERRARO
AKIL "WORLDWIDEFRESH" KING
COI LERAY
JOHNNY MCDAID
ED SHEERAN (PRS)
1801 Records Publishing Group
Bye Felicia's Music / EMI-Blackwood Music, Inc.
King Wit A Dream LLC Publishing
Songs of Universal, Inc. / Sony/ATV Songs LLC
Straight from the Art Music

BARBIE WORLD
KARSTEN DELGADO
ICE SPICE
RIOTUSA
Songs of Universal, Inc.
Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp.

BEJEWELED
JACK ANTONOFF
TAYLOR SWIFT
Ducky Donath Music
Songs of Universal, Inc.
Sony/ATV Songs LLC
TASRM Publishing

BLOODY MARY
FERNANDO GARIBAY
LADY GAGA
CLINTON SPARKS
Compound Entertainment / EMI-Blackwood Music, Inc.
Garibay Music Publishing / House of Gaga Publishing, Inc.
Sony/ATV Songs LLC / Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp.

BOY'S A LIAR PT. 2
ALEXANDER CROSSAN (PRS)
ICE SPICE
RIOTUSA
BMG Platinum Songs US
Songs of Universal, Inc. / Sony/ATV Songs LLC
Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp.

CHEMICAL
ANDREW WATT
Songs of Kobalt Music Publishing

CREEPIN'
ENYA (PRS)
CARLOS "LO" JONES
NICK RYAN (PRS)
ROMA RYAN (PRS)
MARIO WINANS
EMI-Blackwood Music, Inc.
Marsky Music

CRUEL SUMMER
JACK ANTONOFF
TAYLOR SWIFT
Ducky Donath Music / Songs of Universal, Inc.
Sony/ATV Songs LLC / TASRM Publishing

CUPID (TWIN VERSION)
SABRINA CARPENTER
Sabalicious Songs / Songs of Universal, Inc.

DANCE THE NIGHT
CAROLINE AILIN
MARK RONSON
ANDREW WYATT
Concord / Songs of Kobalt Music Publishing
Songs of Universal, Inc. / Songs of Zelig
Sony/ATV Songs LLC / Viking Jamz Publishing
Warner-Barham Music LLC

DANDELIONS
RUTH BERHE
Sony/ATV Ballad

DAYLIGHT
BOON
JEREMY "SARCASTIC SOUNDS" FEDRYK (SOCAN)
DAVID KUSHNER
LIVINGSTON
JOSH BRUCE WILLIAMS
BMG Platinum Songs US / Boon Unlimited Publishing
Livingstons Song Emporium
Miserable Worldwide Publishing / Music of BIG FAMILY
Songs of Universal, Inc. / Sony/ATV Songs LLC
Works by Mood Tunes

DIE FOR YOU
CASHMERE CAT
PRINCE 85
DYLAN "SIR DYLAN" WIGGINS
Back Hair Music Publishing / Infinite Stripes
Prince 85 and the Machines
Songs of Universal, Inc. / Sony/ATV Ballad
Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp.

ESCAPISM
DANIELLE BALBUENA "070 SHAKE"
RAYE
MIKE SABATH
Sony/ATV Ballad / Sony/ATV Songs LLC
Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp.

EYES CLOSED
ED SHEERAN (PRS)
Sony/ATV Songs LLC

FLOWERS
MILEY CYRUS
GREGORY "ALDAE" HEIN
MICHAEL POLLACK
Concord / Droog Publishing / MCEO Publishing
Songs By Gregory Hein / Songs With A Pure Tone
Sony/ATV Songs LLC / These Are Pulse Songs
Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp.
What Key Do You Want It In Music
Wide Eyed Global

FORGET ME
TOM BARNES
MICHAEL POLLACK
Songs With A Pure Tone / Sony/ATV Songs LLC
Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp.
What Key Do You Want It In Music

HELL N BACK
BAKAR (PRS)
ISAIAH BARR
ANDREW "ANDREW AND THE MOON" BOYD
JAKE KOSICH
JOHNNY STEVEN KOSICH, JR.
DIAMOND LEE
MATT SCHAEFFER
Songs of Kobalt Music Publishing
Sony/ATV Songs LLC / Swing Beat Songs

HERE WITH ME
DAN DARMAWAN
BeatStars Publishing Worldwide
Sony/ATV Songs LLC

HOLD ME CLOSER
ELTON JOHN (PRS)
ANDREW WATT
Songs of Kobalt Music Publishing
Universal-Songs of PolyGram International, Inc.

HOW DO I SAY GOODBYE
DEAN LEWIS (APRA)
Songs of Kobalt Music Publishing

I'M GOOD (BLUE)
KAMILLE
BEBE REXHA
BMG Platinum Songs US / Kiss Me If You Can Music
Sony/ATV Songs LLC

JADED
SARAH AARONS (APRA)
MILEY CYRUS
Aggressively Average Songs / MCEO Publishing
Sony/ATV Songs LLC

KARMA
JACK ANTONOFF
KEANU BEATS (APRA)
MARK "SOUNWAVE" SPEARS
JAHAAN SWEET
TAYLOR SWIFT
Ducky Donath Music / Keanu Beats Publishing
Songs of Kobalt Music Publishing
Songs of Universal, Inc. / Sony/ATV Songs LLC
TASRM Publishing

KILL BILL
ROB BISEL
CARTER LANG
SZA
Bisel Creative Sound
Songs of Universal, Inc.
Sony/ATV Songs LLC
Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp.
Zuma Tuna LLC

LAST NIGHT
JOHN BYRON
CHARLIE HANDSOME
Big Loud Mountain
John Byron Music / Sony/ATV Songs LLC
Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp.

LAVENDER HAZE
JACK ANTONOFF
SAM DEW
MARK "SOUNWAVE" SPEARS
JAHAAN SWEET
TAYLOR SWIFT
Ducky Donath Music / Greyscape Songs
Songs of Kobalt Music Publishing
Songs of Universal, Inc. / Sony/ATV Songs LLC
TASRM Publishing

MADE YOU LOOK
SEAN DOUGLAS
Eastman Pond Publishing
Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp.

MAROON
JACK ANTONOFF
TAYLOR SWIFT
Ducky Donath Music / Songs of Universal, Inc.
Sony/ATV Songs LLC / TASRM Publishing

MIDNIGHT RAIN
JACK ANTONOFF
TAYLOR SWIFT
Ducky Donath Music
Songs of Universal, Inc.
Sony/ATV Songs LLC
TASRM Publishing

MUSIC FOR A SUSHI RESTAURANT
TYLER JOHNSON
MITCH ROWLAND
Blackstone Creative
Concord
Songs by Cabin Mobile
Songs of Universal, Inc.
These Are Pulse Songs

NEED A FAVOR
JELLY ROLL
ROB RAGOSTA
Bailee's Ballads
BMG Platinum Songs US
Reservoir 416
Robert Ragosta Publishing

NONSENSE
JULIAN BUNETTA
SABRINA CARPENTER
Dragon Bunny Music
Music of BIG FAMILY / Sabalicious Songs
Songs of Universal, Inc.

PAINT THE TOWN RED
DOJA CAT
EARLONTHEBEAT
KARL RUBIN
Doja Cat Music / Nibur Music Publishing
PearlProductions Publishing / Ryan Buendia Music
Songs of Kobalt Music Publishing
Songs of Universal, Inc.
Where Da Kasz At?

ROMANTIC HOMICIDE
DAN DARMAWAN
BeatStars Publishing Worldwide
Sony/ATV Songs LLC

SEVEN
LATTO
ANDREW WATT
Songs of Kobalt Music Publishing
Sony/ATV Songs LLC

SEX, DRUGS, ETC.
AUSTIN CARDWELL SCATES
ALEX SILVERMAN
SEAN SILVERMAN
Cardwell Music Publishing
Jew Boy Slim Publishing
Music By Feedback Music Group
Sentric Music Songs

SNAP
ALLIE CRYSTAL
TAMAR KAPRELIAN
ROSA LINN
LARZZ PRINCIPATO
LoveFate Music Company
Sony/ATV Songs LLC
Ultra Empire Music
Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp.

SNOOZE
KENNY "BABYFACE" EDMONDS
BLAIR FERGUSON "BLK"
KHRIS RIDDICK-TYNES
SZA
Dylan's Way Music
Reservoir 416
Sam Edmonds Songs
Songs of Kobalt Music Publishing
Songs of Universal, Inc.
Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp.

SNOW ON THE BEACH
JACK ANTONOFF
TAYLOR SWIFT
Ducky Donath Music
Songs of Universal, Inc.
Sony/ATV Songs LLC
TASRM Publishing

STAR WALKIN' (LEAGUE OF LEGENDS WORLDS ANTHEM)
ATIA "INK" BOGGS
OMER FEDI
LIL NAS X
Electric Feel Music
Omer Fedi Music
Songs of Universal, Inc.
Sony/ATV Ballad
Sony/ATV Songs LLC

SUPER FREAKY GIRL
LUNCHMONEY LEWIS
ALONZO MILLER
EMI-Stone Diamond Music Corporation
Food Fight Music
Songs of Kobalt Music Publishing
Where Da Kasz At?

TRUSTFALL
JOHNNY MCDAID
P!NK
EMI-Blackwood Music, Inc.
P!nk Inside Publishing
Sony/ATV Songs LLC

UNHOLY
OMER FEDI
BLAKE SLATKIN
SAM SMITH (PRS)
Back Hair Music Publishing
Electric Feel Music
Omer Fedi Music
Songs of Universal, Inc.
Tim and Danny Music LLC
Two hands and a bit publishing
Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp.

UNTIL I FOUND YOU
STEPHEN SANCHEZ
Songs of Universal, Inc.
Stephen Sanchez Publishing

UNTIL I FOUND YOU (EM BEIHOLD VERSION)
STEPHEN SANCHEZ
Songs of Universal, Inc.
Stephen Sanchez Publishing

VICTORIA'S SECRET
DAN HENIG
MARK NILAN JR.
And the Melody Is
Artist 101 Publishing Group
Songs of Kobalt Music Publishing
Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp.

VIGILANTE SHIT
TAYLOR SWIFT
Songs of Universal, Inc.
TASRM Publishing

YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN, KID
JACK ANTONOFF
TAYLOR SWIFT
Ducky Donath Music
Songs of Universal, Inc.
Sony/ATV Songs LLC
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MUSIC MOVES
OUR WORLD

Clockwise from top: Moses Sumney, Labrinth, Talking Heads' Chris Frantz and Jerry Harrison in *Stop Making Sense*, Zendaya in *Euphoria*, and Justice Smith and Helena Howard in *I Saw the TV Glow*.

Turning It Up

Inside A24 Music and its quiet mission to bring indie star-stacked soundtracks to the big screen

BY KRISTIN ROBINSON   ILLUSTRATION BY ALICE LAGARDE

SUMNEY: SOPHIA SAHARA FOR WWD. LABRINTH: RICK KERN/WIREIMAGE. TALKING HEADS: JORDAN CRONENWETH/COURTESY OF A24. ZENDAYA: MARCELL REV/HBO. SMITH, HOWARD: SPENCER PAZER/COURTESY OF A24.

JESSICA BERNDT HAS worked in film/TV music for almost a decade, most recently as music supervisor with independent label Secretly Group. "I had a few items on [my] music supervision bucket list," she says. "An A24 film was at the top."

In 2021, that dream inched closer when A24 launched its own record label, A24 Music. The in-house entity partnered with Secretly Distribution to build its own catalog of musical intellectual property and ensure its releases appeared on streaming services and in record stores. While it's rare for a film company to start its own label (excluding major conglomerates like Disney), A24 Music showed signs early on it could be the first successful independent filmmaker to bet on a label: To promote its 2016 Academy Award-winning best picture, *Moonlight* — which features an Oscar-nominated score by Nicholas Britell (*Succession*, *The Big Short*, *If Beale Street Could Talk*) — A24 hosted a live performance of its score in London.

Ever since, A24 has maintained a music focus across its projects, from 2021's *C'mon C'mon* (scored by The National's Aaron and Bryce Dessner) to the upcoming *Maxxine* (starring Moses Sumney and Halsey). And in May, Berndt was able to cross off that No. 1 goal from her bucket list with the release of trans horror film *I Saw the TV Glow*, for which she was co-music supervisor alongside Secretly Group founder Chris Swanson.

> **"I had a few items on [my] music supervision bucket list. An A24 film was at the top."**
>
> —JESSICA BERNDT, MUSIC SUPERVISOR

Like *Moonlight* and others before it, *I Saw the TV Glow* leaned heavily on its soundtrack as a marketing tool, using its roster of featured artists to drum up anticipation among its target demographic months before release. Featuring a score by Alex G and original songs by a slate of indie-rock staples including Caroline Polachek, Jay Som and a title track from Phoebe Bridgers and Sloppy Jane (both of whom make cameos in the movie), Berndt says a catchy new song can drive as much advance interest in a film as a well-edited trailer.

While star-powered soundtracks have experienced a revival in the last decade — including for *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse*, *Black Panther*, *The Lion King* and *Barbie* — no one has done it in the indie space quite like A24. The company has expanded its brand as a film company into a formidable and growing music catalog, as well as a meaningful merchandise business and podcast network.

It's that very strategy that enticed Jen Malone to work with the company as music supervisor on the hit HBO show *Euphoria*, which was a turning point for series co-producer A24 as a music-focused outfit. "Music can often be an afterthought in TV and film," Malone says. "In *Euphoria*, we decided at the top that music was going to be like a character in the show, and A24 supported that the whole way through."

Euphoria spawned virality for a number of songs on its soundtrack and, in some cases, led to a streaming uptick of over 2,100%, according to Luminate, following a synch. Whether that was for Labrinth's original score and songs for the show — two of which he and *Euphoria* star Zendaya performed at Coachella in 2023 ("All for Us" and "I'm Tired") — or older licensed works like Gerry Rafferty's "Right Down the Line," Sinéad O'Connor's "Drink Before the War" and DMX's "Party Up," *Euphoria* played a large role in igniting trends that would later perpetuate as popular sounds on TikTok.

A24 also creates extended Spotify playlists based on its soundtracks, as well as special-edition vinyl records, both of which continue to strengthen viewers' relationship with a film long after the lights come on in the theater. On A24's website, hot pink *I Saw the TV Glow* vinyl is for sale next to a myriad of other superfan offerings, from coffee-table books and posters to oddities like *Marcel the Shell* figurines, *Everything Everywhere All at Once* hot dog fingers and *Hereditary*-themed gingerbread kits.

And now, just a few years in, A24 Music is rolling out its most ambitious project yet: a star-studded set titled *Everyone's Getting Involved: A Tribute to the Talking Heads' Stop Making Sense* arriving in July. It follows A24 remastering and rereleasing the band's 1984 classic concert film, *Stop Making Sense*, last year.

And everyone seemingly did get involved with the album, which is just as stacked with major stars like Lorde, Paramore and Miley Cyrus as it is with indie breakouts like The Linda Lindas and Blondshell. "I feel like there's a real sense of play permeating the entire project," says Evan Whikeheart, head of label and shared services at Secretly Distribution. "It was a real joy to hear how all these artists from different musical backgrounds came together to interpret these songs."

Representatives close to A24 Music tell *Billboard* it's still the early days of its exploration into music-focused programming but cite a desire to "attribute the success of A24 Music to all the incredible artists we work with." (The company declined to be interviewed for the story.) Yet Talking Heads' David Byrne says the A24 team is largely responsible for the tribute album's success, saying that he was "absolutely hands off" with the process. "When I saw the list of artists who wanted to do it, I have to say I was pretty excited," Byrne says. "I thought '*Damn*, this is going to be an amazing record.'

"It's hard to imagine that yet another generation might connect with this film," he continues. "We like to believe that life is short and art is long, but here, it is really happening." ◼

The Music That Made Them

THE SONGWRITERS HALL OF FAME will induct the 2024 class — Hillary Lindsey, Dean Pitchford, R.E.M., Steely Dan and Timbaland — at its 53rd annual Induction and Awards Gala on June 13 at the Marriott Marquis Hotel in New York. Diane Warren will be honored with the Johnny Mercer Award, and SZA will receive the Hal David Starlight Award. Country songwriter Cindy Walker will be inducted posthumously this year. Here are the stories behind some of their hits. —CATHY APPLEFELD OLSON

Diane Warren

- **"I Don't Want To Miss a Thing," recorded by Aerosmith**
- **"Here's to the Nights," recorded by Ringo Starr**

"I Don't Want To Miss a Thing" scored Aerosmith its only No. 1 hit on the Billboard Hot 100, where it remained for four weeks in 1998.

"I never, ever thought Aerosmith would do my song. I wasn't in the studio when they were recording, so it went from me teaching Steven Tyler the song at the piano to someone sending me the CD and hearing the finished record. I was blown out of my chair. I think to this day, I'm the only outside songwriter [the band has worked with], except a Beatles [cover of "Come Together"] ... And by the way, a few years ago, Ringo asked me for a song, and it was basically, 'Here's to the nights we won't remember with the friends we won't forget.' My idea was, 'Let's get your old friends and some new friends on there singing along.' And my whole intention was to get Paul McCartney. And Paul was the first person who said yes. So I have two fucking Beatles on my song."

Dean Pitchford

- **"Footloose," co-written and recorded by Kenny Loggins**

The 1984 film's title track spent three weeks at No. 1 and was nominated for an Academy Award.

"I wanted Kenny to be the voice of Kevin Bacon. He had a very big pop career at that point, but he read the script and was interested in coming aboard. He auditioned me by giving me a cassette with a melody he and Steve Perry had come up with. All he would say is it was called 'Don't Fight It.' So I wrote the lyric, and he and Steve loved it. They recorded a duet and got a Grammy nomination — we found out while we were in the trailer at Paramount on preproduction on *Footloose*."

R.E.M.

- **"Losing My Religion," written by Bill Berry, Peter Buck, Mike Mills and Michael Stipe**

The second single from the band's 1991 album, Out of Time, spent 21 weeks on the Hot 100.

"It's a five-minute song with no chorus, and the lead-in is a mandolin. It was a really cool song, there's no doubt about that ... but that is not a recipe for a hit single," Mills recalls. "We never really thought about songs in terms of, 'This is going to be a big hit.' We just wrote the best songs we could. I believe in the record company's mind it was a warmup track for 'Shiny Happy People' or some other thing they thought would be a big hit."

WARREN: RON GALELLA LTD./RON GALELLA COLLECTION/GETTY IMAGES. PITCHFORD: BOB RIHA JR./GETTY IMAGES. R.E.M.: PAUL NATKIN/GETTY IMAGES.

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INSIDE LOOK

The New Neighbor In Town

How record manufacturer Good Neighbor is shaking up the industry with a first-of-its-kind sustainable approach BY LYNDSEY HAVENS

ABOUT A DECADE into his career with Universal Music Group (UMG) — primarily heading A&R and working as a staff producer for Harvest Records — Tim Anderson had a front-row seat to the late-2010s vinyl boom. "It was still an archaic, dinosaur thing," he recalls of how labels approached record pressing. He started to wonder why records were so hard to manufacture and had such long lead times — and what he could do about it.

By the time the pandemic hit, Anderson — who is also a songwriter-producer, composing for *Suits* and working with acts like Banks, Halsey and twenty one pilots — had left his major-label gig and had little interest in producing. Unsure of what to do next, his wife kept reminding him that music is what he knows best and suggested he tackle the vinyl issue that had plagued him years ago.

Twenty minutes later, Anderson made his first call to Scotty Coats, an old friend of his wife's and Capitol Music Group's one-time vinyl marketing manager. Coats immediately expressed his belief in the idea of a more sustainable approach to vinyl manufacturing. The call motivated Anderson — who doesn't have an environmentalist background, admitting he gets confused trying to properly sort his recycling — to figure out how to make his vision a reality.

He found a video online posted by Dutch company Green Vinyl Records, which detailed the development of an environmentally friendly alternative to record manufacturing that is free of polyvinyl chloride. "I'd been told my entire life that you needed the PVC to make a record sound great, and I just believed it," Coats says. "Until Tim came along and inspired me to find a better way."

"We saw it right when we met them that they had made something that could be this huge unlock," Anderson recalls of GVR. He says the company needed a partner to help scale what it had built, and Good Neighbor was able to provide production contacts at many independent and major labels, especially in the United States. "They needed us and we needed them," he says.

Soon after, Anderson met Reyna Bryan, president of innovate packaging company RCD, and in late 2023, he quietly launched Good Neighbor, a first-of-its-kind record-pressing company that manufactures fully recyclable discs, with Reyna as CEO and Coats as vp of sales and marketing. He later hired Coats' friend and UMG manufacturing veteran Jonny O'Hara as vp of productions and operations. "As more people were stepping back into the world of vinyl, a lot of artists were like, 'Is there a more eco-friendly alternative?' " O'Hara recalls. "There were better options coming online, but they were never to the same degree as Good Neighbor."

Instead of a traditional hydraulic press, which uses energy to heat up and cool down, GVR's "futuristic-looking" machine (as O'Hara describes it) uses injection molding of polyethylene terephthalate (PET plastic), which reduces energy by 60% and increases manufacturing by three times. (GVR's single press in the Netherlands, running three eight-hour shifts, has an estimated capacity of 1.2 million records a year.) A second press will arrive in the United States in mid-September. (Good Neighbor is currently raising money through the team's pro-skater friends and music managers.)

Coats and O'Hara are particularly excited about how this new process eliminates paper center labels that require high-heat baking in order to stick to PVC. Instead, Good Neighbor's labels will be directly printed onto the PET plastic, allowing for individual customization of records — a sustainable step forward for exclusivity. Meanwhile, Anderson is thrilled that the machine is "material-agnostic," meaning it can mold any material into a record, but Anderson says most don't sound great — yet. The company is currently testing recycled bottles.

And while Anderson says he leaned on his "purist" friends for feedback on test pressings of the PET plastic and that no one pushed back on quality after listening, he still acknowledges that "audiophiles might not be our target consumer." With Good Neighbor, he says, the goal isn't to shame vinyl connoisseurs for their existing collections but to set a new precedent for sustainability in record production.

"If this industry keeps growing at this pace, it's got to change ... When the biggest artists in the world start selling millions and millions of these shrink-wrapped [vinyl], that's when I was like, 'This feels like something that would be fun to disrupt.' " b

Q & A

Starr

RISING STARR

IN 2021, AYRA STARR documented her journey from adolescence to early adulthood with her debut album, *19 & Dangerous*. The bold collection of bangers and ballads blended Afropop, R&B, trap and *alté* while exploring themes of relationship struggles and finding self-confidence. In 2022, she released her smash "Rush," which earned Starr her first Grammy Award nomination for best African music performance in February. Now, with her second album, *The Year I Turned 21*, Starr contemplates the years since her debut. Across the set, the artist reflects on love, loss, getting rich, gaining wisdom and everything else that came with being 21 through a masterfully curated fusion of Afrobeats, *amapiano*, R&B, hip-hop and pop. She'll take the project on the road opening for Chris Brown's 11:11 Tour and will perform at Glastonbury Festival for the first time in June.

What inspired you to name your albums after the age you were when you made them?
It was literally a flex when I named my first album *19 & Dangerous*. It was very key to represent a teenage African girl. Naming my first album *19 & Dangerous* was me registering for people, "This music you're about to hear was done by a 19-year-old, by the way." I felt like it was a no-brainer for me to name my second album after my age. It's almost like an autobiography.

How did you make a sonically diverse album that still feels cohesive?
It feels very cohesive because of my voice. My voice is my sound, so whatever genre I find myself in, as long as my voice is there, you're going to hear the African sound. You're going to hear me in my Nigerian accent singing and the richness of my voice and my range. I get bored really quickly, so I always like to do different sounds and try different things.

Coco Jones and Anitta feature on "Woman Commando." Why were they the right fit?
I always knew I wanted two strong women. I wanted it to be like the return of Destiny's Child. I was talking to my A&R [executive] like, "Let's try and get a Spanish- or Portuguese [-speaking] person. And I want an R&B singer." I've been listening to Coco Jones since *Let It Shine*, and to have Coco Jones on my album is the craziest thing ever. Anitta's a no-brainer. [My choreographer and I] work out to her music, twerk to her music, so I was like, "Can we ask her for a verse?"

Which song from *The Year I Turned 21* are you most excited to perform live?
I can't wait to perform "Goodbye (Warm Up)" [featuring Asake]. I already have the choreography and everything. I can't wait to be onstage.

—HERAN MAMO

STARR: MIKEY OSHAI

BMI

FILM, TV & VISUAL MEDIA AWARDS 2024

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RAMIN DJAWADI

BMI THEATRICAL FILM AWARDS

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Andrew Wyatt

ELEMENTAL
Thomas Newman

FAST X
Brian Tyler

GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY VOL. 3
John Murphy

INDIANA JONES AND THE DIAL OF DESTINY
John Williams

JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 4
Joel J. Richard

MEG 2: THE TRENCH
Harry Gregson-Williams

OPPENHEIMER
Ludwig Göransson

THE HUNGER GAMES: THE BALLAD OF SONGBIRDS & SNAKES
James Newton Howard

THE LITTLE MERMAID
Alan Menken

THE SUPER MARIO BROS. MOVIE
Brian Tyler

TRANSFORMERS: RISE OF THE BEASTS
Jongnic Bontemps

BMI STREAMING FILM AWARDS

GOOD BURGER 2
Oak Felder

LUCKIEST GIRL ALIVE
Linda Perry

MR. MONK'S LAST CASE: A MONK MOVIE
Jeff Beal

SPIRITED
Dominic Lewis

THE FAMILY PLAN
Kevin Matley

THE GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY HOLIDAY SPECIAL
John Murphy

THE PEOPLE WE HATE AT THE WEDDING
Tom Howe

THE SCHOOL FOR GOOD AND EVIL
Theodore Shapiro

TOTALLY KILLER
Michael Andrews

YOU PEOPLE
Bekon

BMI STREAMING DOCUMENTARY AWARDS

20 DAYS IN MARIUPOL
Jordan Dykstra

HARRY & MEGHAN
Gil Talmi

KELCE
West Dylan Thordson

MURDAUGH MURDERS: A SOUTHERN SCANDAL
Danielle Furst

SHINY HAPPY PEOPLE: DUGGAR FAMILY SECRETS
Gregory Tripi

BMI VIDEO GAME AWARDS

DIABLO IV
Ted Reedy

HOGWARTS LEGACY
chuck e. myers "sea"
J Scott Rakozy

STAR WARS JEDI: SURVIVOR
Stephen Barton

STARFIELD
Inon Zur

BMI STREAMING SERIES AWARDS

1923
Brian Tyler

AHSOKA
Deana Kiner
Kevin Kiner
Sean Kiner

BASED ON A TRUE STORY
Sherri Chung

BEEF
Bobby Krlic

CITADEL
Alex Belcher

GINNY & GEORGIA
Ben Bromfield

LESSONS IN CHEMISTRY
Carlos Rafael Rivera

MAYOR OF KINGSTOWN
Andrew Lockington (SOCAN)

MONARCH: LEGACY OF MONSTERS
Leopold Ross

OUTER BANKS
Fil Eisler

REACHER
Tony Morales

SHRINKING
Tom Howe

SPECIAL OPS: LIONESS
Andrew Lockington (SOCAN)

SUCCESSION
Nicholas Britell

TED LASSO
Tom Howe

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Zach Dawes

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Morgan Kibby
David Klotz

TOM CLANCY'S JACK RYAN
Ramin Djawadi

YOU
Blake Neely

WEDNESDAY
Chris Bacon
Danny Elfman

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ACCUSED
Sean Callery

ALL AMERICAN
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EAST NEW YORK
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EL AMOR INVENCIBLE
Ricardo Larrea

FANTASY ISLAND
Genevieve Vincent

FBI
Conor McHugh
Atli Örvarsson

FBI: INTERNATIONAL
Atli Örvarsson

FBI: MOST WANTED
Atli Örvarsson

FIRE COUNTRY
Fil Eisler

FOUND
Sherri Chung

LAW & ORDER
Mike Post

LAW & ORDER: SVU
Mike Post

MAGNUM P.I.
Keith Power (SOCAN)

NCIS
Brian Kirk

THE COMPANY YOU KEEP
Jeff Garber

THE CONNERS
Antonio Beliveau

THE GOLDBERGS
Michael Wandmacher

THE NEIGHBORHOOD
Kurt Farquhar
Nkenge Kamau

TRUE LIES
Toby Chu

WALKER: INDEPENDENCE
Sean Callery

WILL TRENT
Joe Wong

BMI CABLE TELEVISION AWARDS

BARRY
David Wingo

DARK WINDS
Deana Kiner
Kevin Kiner
Sean Kiner

JUSTIFIED: CITY PRIMEVAL
Mark Isham

MAYANS M.C.
David Wingo

MAYFAIR WITCHES
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PERRY MASON
Terence Blanchard

THE WALKING DEAD: DARYL DIXON
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POWER PLAYERS

The independent community has never been as diverse, or as vibrant, as it is in 2024, as artists, labels and distributors have more options — and more challenges — than ever before. But for many in this business, that just means there are more opportunities than ever, too. From long-established companies that have adapted and thrived to new upstarts made for this moment, the spirited, free-thinking world of indie music is leading the industry into a novel era of creativity, ingenuity — and success.

BIG DEAL

With his relentless creative vision, work ethic and entrepreneurial instincts, **Brent Faiyaz** ascended the charts, scored a lucrative partnership with UnitedMasters — and became one of today's most successful independent artists

BY GAIL MITCHELL

PHOTOGRAPHED BY AUSTIN HARGRAVE

Faiyaz photographed April 11 in Los Angeles.

Styling by Emily Cavari
Givenchy shirt, jacket, pants and shoes.

AT JUST 10 YEARS old, Christopher Brent Wood's metamorphosis into indie disruptor Brent Faiyaz began.

As he collected CDs by D'Angelo, Lauryn Hill and Joe, among other R&B/hip-hop artists, the youngster would steadily pore over album liner notes, absorbing the behind-the-scenes details of how his favorite albums were made. By middle school, he had set up his first home studio, with a USB mic and downloaded software — the start of his shift from music fan to music-maker.

"I was making money selling beats; that's how I got a lot of my friends when I was younger," Faiyaz, 28, recalls today of his teenage years in the Baltimore area. "It'd be like grown motherfuckers coming to the house to get beats off me. My parents were like, 'Who are these grown adults coming by the house? What's going on?' "

Faiyaz's parents had once pushed him to attend college. But eventually, that morphed into, "Can you just please graduate [high school]?" Faiyaz recalls with a chuckle, "because my grades were so bad. It was like you can do something all day every day, but if it's not bringing no money to the house, they figured you needed a plan B or C. But music was all I wanted to do. So I kind of had to prove them wrong."

Faiyaz has done just that. Since he began releasing his own music on SoundCloud over a decade ago, he has upended the contemporary R&B scene with his raw, frank lyrics and '90s-vibed alt-R&B sound — and become a bona fide mainstream hit-maker in the process. After gaining national attention with his guest turn (alongside Shy Glizzy) on GoldLink's multiplatinum hit "Crew," Faiyaz dropped his debut studio album, *Sonder Son*, in 2017. His loyal fan base continued to grow, and he broke through on the Billboard 200 in 2020 with his EP *Fuck the World*, which charted 13 songs on the Billboard Hot 100, 20 on Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs and 33 on Hot R&B Songs.

Meanwhile, Faiyaz's unwavering work ethic, creative visual flair and keen entrepreneurial instincts have helped him craft one of independent music's biggest recent success stories. In 2015, he and his manager, Ty Baisden, co-founded the label Lost Kids, which released *Fuck the World* and *Wasteland*, and their success caught the attention of music distributor UnitedMasters and its founder and CEO, Steve Stoute. The company partnered with Faiyaz in 2023 to launch creative agency ISO Supremacy, and Faiyaz's first ISO album, *Larger Than Life*, arrived that October, reaching No. 11 on the Billboard 200. The same year, he embarked on his F*ck the World, It's a Wasteland world tour, playing theaters and grossing $5.3 million over 18 shows, according to Billboard Boxscore.

"A lot of it was timing," the soft-spoken Faiyaz reflects today over his lunch of Mongolian lamb at a tony Beverly Hills restaurant. "I was fortunate enough to be in a space where I had the mainstream hit record with 'Crew,' and then I also had the underground shit. So I was able to tackle the super music heads and the mainstream audience all at one time. By the time *Wasteland* dropped, it was just perfect timing."

Of course, for him to take advantage of such perfect timing, he had to put in the work first. After graduating from high school in 2013, Faiyaz (whose stage surname means "artistic leader" in Arabic and was inspired by a close high school friend who's Muslim) relocated to Charlotte, N.C. While he worked jobs at a grocery store and Dunkin', Faiyaz continued to record and upload music on SoundCloud for his budding fan base. That's where his kindred indie spirit — and eventual manager and business partner — Baisden discovered him. But it was Faiyaz's singing, not his rapping, that intrigued Baisden.

"I clicked on a song called 'Natural Release,' " says Baisden, who broke into the business as a manager in 2008 before co-founding multisector firm COLTURE in 2018. "It was the only song that Brent was singing and had more plays than all the other songs. While it gave me a whole wave like Frank Ocean, the way Brent's tone felt made it his own world. I was like, 'Man, this is fire,' because he raps how he talks but he doesn't sing how he talks. It's a completely different audio experience."

"IT KILLS ME WHEN LABELS SIGN AN ARTIST KNOWING WHO THAT ARTIST IS CREATIVELY, BUT THEN THEY TRY TO DICTATE THEIR MUSIC AND OTHER THINGS. NOTHING IS GOING TO STIFLE YOUR CREATIVITY MORE THAN HAVING TO SAY YES TO SOME LAME SHIT THAT YOU DON'T WANT TO DO OR BEING TOLD NO TO SOME REALLY COOL SHIT THAT YOU WANT TO DO." —FAIYAZ

bowed at No. 20; two years later, his second studio album, *Wasteland*, debuted at No. 2 on the chart, powered by the platinum singles "Gravity" (with Tyler, The Creator) and "Wasting Time" (with Drake and The Neptunes). Faiyaz has earned 4.7 million equivalent album units in the United States and 6.5 billion official on-demand U.S. streams for songs on which he's the lead artist, according to Luminate, and he has

But despite his love of R&B, Faiyaz didn't initially see himself as "built for R&B singing. I wasn't really a take-my-shirt-off-and-show-my-abs kind of guy [onstage], so I didn't think I was suited for it. And Ty said, 'That doesn't necessarily have to be what you do.' So I just took the things that I would have been rapping about and put it in a way where I could sing it."

Baisden flew to Charlotte to meet Faiyaz, and the pair ultimately joined forces as founding partners in Lost Kids, named for Faiyaz's high school crew; he has the letters tattooed on his knuckles. "The whole ideology of Lost Kids came from [Brent]," Baisden says. He handles everything related to Faiyaz's business; Faiyaz maintains control over all creative aspects of his career. ("He isn't in the studio with me; he isn't picking my singles," he says of Baisden.) As 50/50 partners in Lost Kids, Baisden and Faiyaz have — beyond music and publishing — also invested in startup companies, real estate and the Show You Off grant program, which supports Black women entrepreneurs. In a full-circle moment, Faiyaz's mother, Jeanette, is also involved in Lost Kids' philanthropic efforts.

"If we hadn't met each other," Faiyaz says of Baisden, "we would both definitely still be successful in our respective lanes because we're both so driven and focused with similar visions. We're learning from each other, but we didn't go into this trying to do each other's jobs. That's what makes our alliance so special."

AS HE AND FAIYAZ started working together, Baisden laid down one cardinal rule out of the gate for independent success: "That budget is the Bible." Indie artists especially "have to really understand that," he says today. "Brent would get mad because I'd say, 'We can't afford that, it's too much. We'll go out of business.' "

"Oh, man, it was the worst," Faiyaz recalls with a laugh. "I was so focused on creativity that my ideas were outrageous. For me, a budget limited my creativity; it was like, 'Pop the balloon.' "

"The funny thing," Baisden explains, "[is] that when you look back today at our 2018 video for 'Gang Over Luv' [an early Faiyaz single], it only cost $50,000. But we still had Brent on a dirt bike, flying on a plane, the plane blowing up… it was incredible for being shot independently. There weren't a lot of videos, but those that were shot were good investments. And the [budget] backlash at the time grew a smarter executive." Now Faiyaz says he knows not only how to work with a budget but "how to maximize off the bare minimum — probably one of the most important things I've learned."

When Faiyaz began truly blowing up in 2020, he found himself among a formidable contingent of male crooners including PartyNextDoor, Bryson Tiller, Lucky Daye and fellow newcomer Giveon. His supple tenor, which effortlessly slides into falsetto range in a way that's reminiscent of R&B's '90s heyday, helped him stake his claim.

SET DESIGN BY CALDER GREENWOOD. MANICURE BY TEMEKA JACKSON AT A-FRAME AGENCY.

Wales Bonner suit and
Ray-Ban sunglasses.

"I love things that sound throwback but are unique," says Grammy Award-winning producer No I.D., who collaborated with Faiyaz on *Wasteland*. "Brent's music gives me a lot of the energy I felt from what I call the basement crew back then with Jodeci, Timbaland and Static. It has a gospel overtone, but it's not gospel. There's a tension in it. But it's not overly soft even when he says 'soft' things."

That tension stems from Faiyaz's raw, fearless lyrics, which explore subjects ranging from life post-pandemic and the pressures of fame to romance and self-love, paired with his melodious and innovative blend of R&B, Afrobeats, rap, pop and other sonic influences. "His music always has a little edge to it. I love witty lyrics and syncopation," No I.D. adds. "It's just a great mixture for me. And a lot of people don't have that naturally."

Because of that edge, especially in its lyrics, some listeners have labeled his music "toxic," pointing to songs like "F*ck the World" ("Your n—a caught us texting/You said, 'Baby, don't be mad, you know how Brent is' ") and "WY@" from *Larger Than Life* ("I be doing shit I really shouldn't do for real/That's why I always tell you to come through for real"). But Faiyaz says he's simply drawing on real life, whether his own experiences, those of friends or just "keeping my ear to the street and checking the temperature."

"R&B music is soulful and reality-driven," he continues. "I want to portray the good, the bad, the ugly... I want to have a song for every situation you could possibly be going through. Life can be toxic sometimes, and I have records for that. That word tends to be the narrative because of the shock involved when people say, 'Man, I can't believe you said that.' But people who have been following my music know that for every toxic record, there's a heartfelt record, a sweet record. But being toxic was never the vision or intentional identity I was trying to portray. I'm making songs that to me are true."

The initially shy Faiyaz grows impassioned as he discusses his love of songwriting. Prince and Stevie Wonder first sparked it in him, but he also names Max Martin, Dolly Parton, Kurt Cobain and more from far beyond R&B and hip-hop as influences. "When it comes to songwriting, genre doesn't matter," he says. "I grew up on a lot of different music, and I'm big on lyrics. I love writing music because it's cathartic, my biggest form of release. If I leave it on a song, I don't have to walk around with it."

FAIYAZ HAS CONSIDERED, more than once, what a nonindependent career might look like. Early on, he pitched himself to major-label A&R executives. "The idea of going to a label and doing a deal was only something that I knew to do because that's what I'd seen done so many times," he reflects. "They offered me deals that I wasn't trying to sign: Giving me a percentage of some music that I made before I even came to [them] just didn't sit right. There was no deep spiritual stance or me planting a flag of

Isabel Marant jacket, shirt, pants and shoes. Right page: Givenchy shirt and jacket.

independence. It was just, 'This deal doesn't make sense, so I'm not going to do it.' "

By 2016, multiple labels under the majors were courting him. And following the one-two punch of *Fuck the World* and *Wasteland*, they came calling again. At that point, it had been several years since Faiyaz had last met with executives on that side of the industry — so despite "already having a grudge" from that first experience, he was willing to hear them out. This time around, however, he kept another of Baisden's key rules of independence in mind: Know your value.

"It kills me when labels sign an artist knowing who that artist is creatively, but then they try to dictate their music and other things," he explains. "Nothing is going to stifle your creativity more than having to say yes to some lame shit that you don't want to do or being told no to some really cool shit that you want to do. It's really no deeper than that for me. So I went with my gut."

That brought Faiyaz to UnitedMasters and Steve Stoute. "Brent was unapologetically independent prior to me meeting him," Stoute recalls. "In fact, that was what made me so interested in him. I knew that he was turning down major labels left and right. He had built a very strong team and infrastructure with his manager, Ty. So what he was looking for was a partner to provide him financial capital to go into other ventures that were creative."

In a partnership deal signed in May 2023 — which a source close to the situation told *Billboard* at the time was valued at nearly $50 million — the pair announced the launch of Faiyaz's own creative agency specializing in "visual and sonic art": ISO Supremacy (ISO stands for "in search of"). "I liked the model, the creative freedom," says Faiyaz, who serves as CEO. "And I was able to keep working with the people I'd been working with." At the agency, "from the artists we work with to the creatives and directors we have on board, everything is pretty much about just what we think is cool [or are] hearing word-of-mouth spreading about something that is fire — and then we see how we're going to translate and elevate this shit to the world."

"Brent is a very talented musician and visual artist," Stoute says. "He's a very intelligent businessman whose contributions to the music business and independent artists have been profound." One of those artists is R&B/hip-hop singer-songwriter Tommy Richman, ISO Supremacy's first signee — brought to Faiyaz's attention by his high school friend and ISO partner/COO Darren Xu — through a joint venture with PULSE Records. (Faiyaz's relationship with PULSE dates back to 2016, when he entered his first publishing deal with PULSE Music Group after moving to Los Angeles; he renewed it in 2022.) Following his August 2023 signing, Richman — also managed by Xu and who opened Faiyaz's recent tour and appeared on *Larger Than Life* — rocketed to No. 2 on the Hot 100 in May with his first single, "Million Dollar Baby."

"You soak in a lot," Richman says of his time spent with Faiyaz. "I feel like if I didn't

move with Brent this past year — with the shit that's happening right now — I would crash and burn. Being with him at clubs or shows, seeing how he interacts with people and how he carries himself, I picked up on a lot. You'd think that hanging out with somebody like that, you'd get a big ego. But honestly, it has humbled me more. He's just a normal fucking guy from Maryland who just makes beautiful songs."

As with Baisden, PULSE Music Group senior vp/head of creative Ashley Calhoun and now with Xu, Stoute and Richman, Faiyaz's business interactions reflect how he has prioritized building long-term relationships as an independent artist. "I'm about the people more than I am about anything else," Faiyaz says. "If I can run with you and kick it with you when there's no business being discussed, then you're somebody I want to do business with."

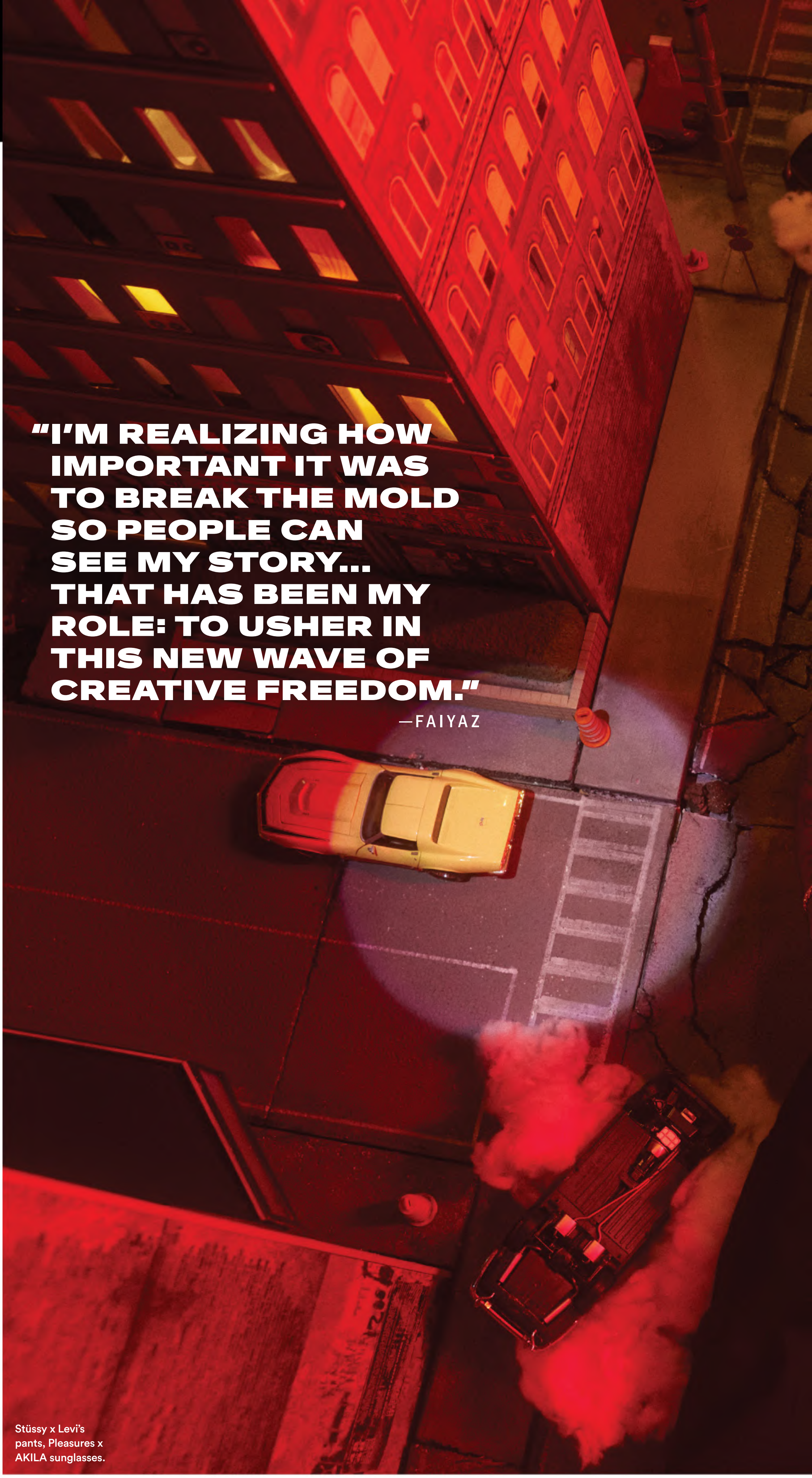
Since wrapping his most recent tour in November, Faiyaz, who lives in Miami, has been enjoying some downtime. But that doesn't keep him from enthusiastically reeling off a list of projects he's currently developing, ranging from films, commercials and signing more artists to further expanding his clothing brand, NUWO (an acronym, in keeping with his indie ethos, for Not Unless We Own). He's even picking up a long-forgotten passion again: drawing, which he last did in a class he received a scholarship for at the Maryland Institute College of Art when he was 8. When it comes to creation of any kind, Faiyaz says, "I love everything about the ideation process, every piece of it. Then once it gets to the point of consumption, I'm past it and moving on to the next."

As our lunch winds down and the restaurant becomes quiet, our waiter returns with the culinary director in tow: It turns out that both are major-league Faiyaz fans. "Thanks for coming," the director says with palpable excitement. "I wish you'd been at Coachella. Keep doing your thing; you're killing it!"

Faiyaz seems surprised to be treated like a rock star. "Thank you, man. Appreciate you," he responds politely, seeming to register a gamut of emotions that evolve from slightly surprised to humble to quietly moved as he agrees to the duo's tentative request for a photo. But that brief exchange encapsulates just how far Faiyaz has come in his unwavering quest to own all facets of his career — and to telegraph that message to aspiring artists and listeners alike.

"My role musically and artistically, that's not really up for me to interpret," Faiyaz says matter-of-factly. "There are still a lot more things I want to learn. But now I'm realizing how important it was to break the mold so that people can see my story, see what we did and say, 'All right, I can do that. It's just another way to go about it. It doesn't really have to be so black and white.' That has been my role: to usher in this new wave of creative freedom."

Additional reporting by Shira Brown and Carl Lamarre.



"I'M REALIZING HOW IMPORTANT IT WAS TO BREAK THE MOLD SO PEOPLE CAN SEE MY STORY... THAT HAS BEEN MY ROLE: TO USHER IN THIS NEW WAVE OF CREATIVE FREEDOM."

—FAIYAZ

Stüssy x Levi's pants, Pleasures x AKILA sunglasses.

THE WOMEN OF COLT

JENNAIR RENNIE, VENESSA GONZALEZ, LAILA ALI, JAYNE ANDREW (co-founder), ALEXIS FUMERO, GLORIA KUBANDI, ACEANI MICHELLE, PHYLICIA GOINGS, CARRON MITCHELL, Esq. of Nixon Peabody LLP, Legal for COLTURE's artist roster

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COLTURE.CC

PHOTOGRAPHER: MARK PEACED

INDEPENDENT SPIRIT

From Latin hit-makers to alt-country mavericks, some of music's most compelling artists take the indie route — and as they and their managers tell *Billboard*, the benefits are major

THE ADVICE I'D OFFER ANY INDIE ARTIST IS...

"Take mindful steps to get to know and understand your artist identity so that you can become something unique and genuine — whether it's through vision boards, writing diaries or practicing adjacent forms of artistry to help you flesh out your identity as a musician. It has been instrumental to me in making sure I don't lose my way."

—PARIS PALOMA (NETTWERK)

"Freedom is the most important asset an artist can have, in many more ways than just artistic. If you're serious about being independent and you know how to work it, it's way better than signing with an established label. For example, I own my own publishing company. I own my touring company. The capability of reacting and not being on a part-semester plan or a year plan is priceless. The capacity of reaction is one of the biggest assets of being independent."

—PEPE AGUILAR (EQUINOX RECORDS, MACHÍN RECORDS)

ONE OF THE MOST CHALLENGING PARTS OF BEING INDEPENDENT IS...

"Being able to make connections with global artists who are represented by major labels for collaborations."

—CRIS MJ (STARS MUSIC CHILE/RIMAS ENTERTAINMENT)

"If you're grinding to get to your highest point of success and you started by yourself, it means more when you make it. The celebration when you make it is different because you get to say that you gave all of yourself to your dream, no matter who believed or didn't."

—LAY BANKZ (ARTIST PARTNER GROUP)

"Being an independent artist means having total control over both your art and your business. This requires being an entrepreneur, taking all the risks and having no one to blame but yourself and your team. Make sure you have a good team. You can still yell at the label when you are the label, but you will be yelling in the mirror.

"That said, where there is great risk there is great reward. The potential upside is tremendous when you own your own masters and publishing. Don't let anyone ever convince you 'independent' is synonymous with 'small' or 'broke.'"

—ANDREW McINNES, CEO, TMWRK MANAGEMENT; MANAGER, STURGILL SIMPSON (HIGH TOP MOUNTAIN)

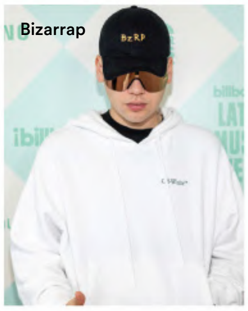
Simpson

"We have been able to have full control of our music without having to encounter a lot of politics and red tape that other artists do. It has given us the ability to do what we love most in the way we feel is best, and it even allowed us the freedom to experiment with different sounds on our newest album, *Jugando A Que No Pasa Nada*."

—GRUPO FRONTERA (GRUPO FRONTERA)

"Independence, to me, is having autonomy and ownership of your art. This makes me feel a closer connection to my audience because they know that what comes from me *is* from me."

—LAUFEY (AWAL)



"An indie artist has to have the understanding and knowledge to grasp that investing in their own career is crucial, whether in marketing, in making better content, in doing big tours and shows. An indie artist is one who makes decisions and pays for them from his own pocket."

—FEDE LAURIA, MANAGER, BIZARRAP (DALE PLAY RECORDS)

WHY IS BEING INDEPENDENT IMPORTANT TO YOU?

"So I can own my music and I can control my whole world more easily. Being able to work and keep my music in my possession [means] I can have everything in the future. That's why I work with UnitedMasters."

—FLOYYMENOR (UNITEDMASTERS)

THE ADVICE I'D OFFER ANY INDIE ARTIST IS…

"Establish and maintain a clear budget. By implementing a detailed budgeting system early on, I was able to allocate funds effectively, ensuring that I always had enough money set aside for crucial aspects of my career. By tracking income and expenses diligently, artists can make informed decisions about where to invest their resources, ultimately leading to greater financial stability and long-term success."

—310BABII (HIGH IQ/EMPIRE)

THE BIGGEST BENEFIT OF BEING INDEPENDENT IS…

"Maintaining creative control over the strategies and music that I create. [My song] 'Daylight' [had an] original release date scheduled for June, but I knew we had to get it out as soon as possible based on all the engagement we were building around it on socials. I called my manager and just told him we needed to get the song out, and the team made it happen. I think if I were signed to a [major] label, I wouldn't have been able to make a last-minute change like that and the song wouldn't have had as big of an impact."

—DAVID KUSHNER (MISERABLE MAN MUSIC)

310BABII: ALLEN BEREZOVSKY/GETTY IMAGES. BIZARRAP: CHRISTOPHER POLK FOR BILLBOARD. CRIS MJ: CRISS MAYO. KUSHNER: JOHN NACION FOR VARIETY. FLOYYMENOR: IGNACIO CRUZ. GRUPO FRONTERA: GUSTAVO CABALLERO FOR BILLBOARD. BANKZ: KEVIN MAZUR/GETTY IMAGES. LAUFEY: ROBERTO RICCIUTI/REDFERNS. PALOMA: HODA DAVAINE/DAVE BENETT/GETTY IMAGES. AGUILAR: JUAN NAHARRO GIMENEZ/GETTY IMAGES. SIMPSON: GARY MILLER/GETTY IMAGES.

"I learned how to play in public. Taught myself how to play guitar and sing and write songs standing on street corners. If I were you, I wouldn't sign any contracts, ever, if you don't have to. Because it ain't to your advantage. Unless they're giving you a whole bunch of money — and even then, try and get the cash with a handshake. Let me put it to you like this: If you don't know who the sucker in the deal is, it's you.

"Asking why being independent's important is really beside the point. I didn't set out to be independent. I was always seen as so confusing and so different that the people I was dying to do business with didn't want me. The woman that discovered us, when she started realizing that I was going to be difficult to handle or tame, one afternoon in frustration, she threw her hands down on her desk and looked across at me and said, 'Goddamn it, Charley Crockett. It's a Coke and Pepsi world, and you are going to have to dance.' She said my problem was that I just wanted to be Woody Guthrie and this was my one golden opportunity. Well, the only thing she was right about is I did want to be Woody Guthrie. Where we disagreed is, I don't think you have one shot. You just have to keep rolling the dice.

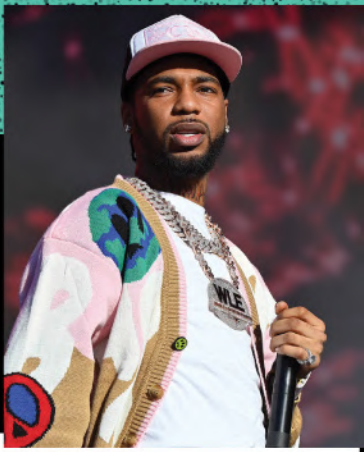
"At a certain point, I felt like I was out in the wilderness. And when you get far enough out there, the air is real good. You learn how to survive in it, and you just keep going. Don't ever turn around."

—CHARLEY CROCKETT (SON OF DAVY/THIRTY TIGERS)

THE ADVICE I'D OFFER ANY INDIE ARTIST IS...

"Trust the process."

—KEY GLOCK (PAPER ROUTE/EMPIRE)



THE BIGGEST BENEFIT OF BEING INDEPENDENT IS...

"I can work closely with my team and lead my projects, making sure my goals come to reality. At the end of the day, as the artist and mind of my project, that makes it easier for all to be on the same page."

—JUNIOR H (RANCHO HUMILDE)

"It's so important for an artist to be able to say yes or no without manipulation or punishment. I believe creative freedom is priceless. Art is beautiful. It is honest, it is therapy, it is healing, it is personal, and it is often disrupted and tainted by business minds and models looking to make a quick coin. While the independent route is not without its own risks [like] self-financing, I am truly grateful to be able to be in control of my life and my art."

—RAYE (HUMAN RE SOURCES)

THE ADVICE I'D OFFER ANY INDIE ARTIST IS...

"Trust yourself, be authentic and see your artistic vision through. Continue to create the music that speaks to you that will resonate with your core audience, and don't compromise for quick commercial success."

—SHABOOZEY (EMPIRE)

"Being an independent artist is one of the most empowering positions to be in. Independent artists feel the weight of responsibility for the future of their careers, which I think oftentimes leads to an increase in grit and work ethic.

"I think I've realized the power and value of a team that's aligned with the artist's vision. A small but effective team around an independent artist and the right strategic partnerships can make a huge difference."

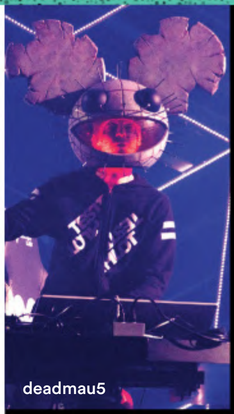
—JVKE (AWAL)

Crutchfield

THE ADVICE I'D OFFER ANY INDIE ARTIST IS...

"A personal connection with your team is paramount. As the industry continues to shift, having a team that you trust and can envision being in your life for the next two, five, 10, 15 years is crucial. Katie Crutchfield has always had a very specific vision for Waxahatchee. While it has certainly evolved over the years, having a group of a few core, trusted team members around her has been key to keeping Katie's goals focused and achievable."

—REYNOLD JAFFE, ANOTHER MANAGEMENT COMPANY; MANAGER, WAXAHATCHEE (ANTI-)


deadmau5

THE BIGGEST BENEFIT OF BEING INDEPENDENT IS...

"Being in control of your intellectual property, how you monetize it, release it and promote it. At the end of the day, you then own all of your own IP, to sell or continue working as you'd like to, on your own terms."

—DEAN WILSON, MANAGER, DEADMAU5 (MAU5TRAP)

WHY IS BEING INDEPENDENT IMPORTANT TO YOU?

"Because being a musician means being a part of the music industry, it begins to entangle creativity and business — which can be incredibly difficult and painful for artists. Being independent, we are able to maintain creative control over the vast majority of what we do, and it's something I would never consider giving up."

—KHRUANGBIN'S LAURA LEE OCHOA (DEAD OCEANS)

Djo

"For Djo, the most important aspect of releasing music is to allow for people to discover the songs and who is behind them on their own. By staying independent, he is under no pressure to rush his campaigns."

—NICK STERN, MANAGER, DJO (AWAL)

THE ADVICE I'D OFFER ANY INDIE ARTIST IS...

"Surround yourself with a team that you trust and you know will put your career and the integrity of your music first. I couldn't do anything I do without my team, from my label to management and beyond. From *American Idol* to moving to Nashville to being thrown headfirst into the unknown world of the music industry, I'm so grateful I had all of them there to guide me, my music and my career from the very beginning."

—CHAYCE BECKHAM (WHEELHOUSE/BBR MUSIC GROUP)

CROCKETT: TIBRINA HOBSON/GETTY IMAGES. BECKHAM: JASON KEMPIN/GETTY IMAGES. DEADMAU5: SANTIAGO FELIPE/GETTY IMAGES. DJO: MARILLA SICILIA/MONDADORI PORTFOLIO/GETTY IMAGES. JUNIOR H: ADRIÁN MONROY/MEDIOS Y MEDIA/GETTY IMAGES. JVKE: DAVID LIVINGSTON/WIREIMAGE. KEY GLOCK: PARAS GRIFFIN/GETTY IMAGES. OCHOA: SCOTT DUDELSON/GETTY IMAGES. RAYE: JACOPO RAULE/GETTY IMAGES. SHABOOZEY: CORINE SOLBERG/GETTY IMAGES. CRUTCHFIELD: MATT WINKELMEYER/GETTY IMAGES.

CONTRIBUTORS Katie Bain, Eric Renner Brown, Leila Cobo, Hannah Dailey, Kyle Denis, Griselda Flores, Lyndsey Havens, Carl Lamarre, Heran Mamo, Melinda Newman, Isabela Raygoza, Kristin Robinson, Jessica Roiz

Who is "indie"? The artists featured in this story meet the guidelines of *Billboard*'s Top Independent Albums chart, which includes labels distributed independently or through the indie division of a major-label group as well as labels that are independently owned and control their masters but are distributed directly through Universal Music Group, Sony Music Entertainment or Warner Music Group.

EXECUTIVE OF THE YEAR

TY BAISDEN

The COLTURE co-founder's three-year search for an artist business partner led him to Brent Faiyaz — and a fruitful alliance that now includes a music startup, real estate holdings, and sports and multimedia agencies

BY GAIL MITCHELL   PHOTOGRAPHED BY DEVIN CHRISTOPHER

IT'S 9 P.M. ON A WEDNESDAY EVENING IN MIAMI, and Ty Baisden is still taking care of business with an energy level that belies the hour.

"I'm a firm sleeper who gets my eight hours," says Baisden, his Georgian drawl giving way to laughter. "But what I don't do is the bullshit. So subtract the bullshit, and you've got a lot of time to work and a lot of time to rest."

That philosophy has anchored Baisden since he broke into the business as a manager in 2008. During that time, the native Atlantan also closely observed successful creative/business partnerships including Disturbing Tha Peace Records with Ludacris and Chaka Zulu and Grand Hustle Records with T.I. and Jason Geter.

Given the tenuousness of most manager-artist relationships, Baisden wanted to apply that collaborative model to the right act. "I was like, 'I've got to find an artist that will want to partner with me where they deal with all the creative and I deal with all the business. Then we can build a company together, and we'll be protected because the company *is* our protection.' "

Baisden photographed May 9 in Miami.

In 2014, he found an ideal artist-partner in Brent Faiyaz after discovering him on SoundCloud. "It wasn't an easy thing," Baisden recalls. "I had executives telling me, 'Don't partner with artists; that's dumb.' And I had artists thinking, 'No, I'd rather do something with a major label.' Brent was the first artist that really believed in the overall process of that kind of partnership."

Over the last nine years, the business alignment between Baisden's firm COLTURE — an acronym that stands for Can Our Leverage Teach Us Real Equity — where he is head of ventures and innovation — and Faiyaz's Lost Kids label has yielded several successes. Among them: Faiyaz's 2020 EP, *Fuck the World*, bowing at No. 20 on the Billboard 200, followed by his momentous No. 2 debut with second studio album *Wasteland* — against Bad Bunny's multiweek No. 1 juggernaut *Un Verano Sin Ti* — in 2022.

Then in 2023, Faiyaz's F*ck the World, It's a Wasteland Tour grossed $5.3 million and sold 68,000 tickets over 18 shows, according to Billboard Boxscore. Separately, in 2023, he launched his own creative agency, ISO Supremacy, in partnership with UnitedMasters. (Baisden is not involved.) ISO joined forces with PULSE Records in an artist development joint venture, and in May struck gold with genre-melding R&B singer Tommy Richman, whose "Million Dollar Baby" has spent two weeks at No. 2 on the Billboard Hot 100.

Splitting his time between Atlanta and Miami with a 22-member staff, Baisden, 40, works alongside COLTURE co-founder and head of creative services Jayne Andrew and partner Paris "PK" Kirk. The three are also co-founders and equity partners in COLTURE Holdings, which houses the firm's nonmusic-related businesses.

"I don't manage artists," Baisden says of the business he has built with Faiyaz. "The skin that I have in the game is seeing another Black man be successful in whatever they want to do."

What COLTURE accomplishment stands out over the last 18 months?
Our company vertically integrated and built Brent's [2023] tour from start to finish. Usually, management will hire out for everything to get done. I partnered with Wasserman Music's Callender to route it and negotiate the deals. Meanwhile, I handled the entire budget. Jayne handled all the band details, creative direction and making sure Brent felt comfortable onstage while PK handled all the lifestyle and afterparty events. And we each split time going to the different [tour stops] and booking the buses, freight and travel.

That's not the job of managers, but we're not managers; we build businesses. To build a business, you've got to manage the budget so you can determine your margin. Brent's tour profited because we controlled every single dollar that was spent. I just think that's very loud. So many people go out on the road and don't make money. The artist gets paid, but when it's time to do your balance sheet, you come out in the red. Many times, when you have other people managing a big lift, you're going to get blindly overcharged.

How does the COLTURE partnership with Faiyaz and Lost Kids work?
Christopher Brent Wood [Faiyaz's birth name] and I are business partners. When Christopher turns into the artist Brent Faiyaz and I'm operating on the latter's behalf, then my job title is manager, for which I get a percentage. That's probably the best way I can put it. We're 50/50 partners in Lost Kids, under which we have multiple businesses. That was basically our handshake to one another in the beginning. Those projects and his tours are the financial seeds for Brent and me to go out and make individual investments. Lost Kids gave Brent the opportunity to invest in ISO Supremacy with his high school friend Darren Xu, and now they're having a huge success with Tommy Richman. Beyond music and publishing, our biggest investments under Lost Kids involve real estate in Atlanta and Dallas and more than 20 startup companies, including Athletic Greens, Therabody, Audio Shake and Seed. And the great thing is three of those four companies — Seed, Audio Shake and Athletic Greens — are led by women.

"THE SKIN THAT I HAVE IN THE GAME IS SEEING ANOTHER BLACK MAN BE SUCCESSFUL IN WHATEVER THEY WANT TO DO."

—BAISDEN

Lost Kids also sponsors annual initiatives on behalf of female executives and entrepreneurs.
We just finished our fourth annual Show You Off grant program, giving 12 women $10,000 grants each to run their own business or launch a new idea. One of the policies of the grant is to reward Black women that are from the DMV [Washington, D.C., Maryland and Virginia] area. This year was a heavy one with new ideas involving STEM companies, [artificial intelligence] technology, electric batteries, etc. Thus far, we've donated about half a million dollars or more to Black women-helmed businesses.

What additional clients and businesses are under the COLTURE umbrella?
On the producer side, we have Nascent, who's just finishing his project, *Don't Grow Up Too Soon*, that we'll distribute independently; Jordan Waré and Dpat, who have both worked with Brent. We have a partnership with [podcast] *Million Dollaz Worth of Game* to help [former rapper/co-host Gillie Da Kid] build out a music division. We're doing their artist N3wyrkla's first rollout with Troy Carter's Venice Music. We collaborate as well with [pop duo] Emotional Oranges on distribution and creative direction when needed. Then, in the same kind of partnership I have with Brent, there's Canadian female artist Kalisway, who writes and produces funk and R&B. Lastly, we're helping actor Malcolm Mays [Starz's *Raising Kanan*] launch his music career to diversify his business.

What's the biggest issue facing the independent community right now?
An indie company can put out a song and the song can blow up, but more than likely, the company doesn't have sufficient infrastructure to make sure everybody's paid fairly based on their contributions to the record that just changed their artist's life. The artist and the label are going to get big checks, but the songwriters and producers are probably going to get paid a year or two later, depending on how savvy their manager is — if they even have a manager.

Where do you envision COLTURE three to five years from now?
We have a 10-year plan outlining that parent company COLTURE Holdings will be generating $100 million in revenue by 2030. That's the goal. Over the next three years, we're launching our full-fledged media department, including TV, film, podcasting and digital content. The sports division is developing, and we're continuing our real estate operation. We're basically building a community and a pipeline for disrupters who can either stay within our ecosystem or build their own businesses.

Additional reporting by Shira Brown.

CONGRATULATIONS

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BILLBOARD'S 2024 INDEPENDENT POWER PLAYERS

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STRENGTH IN NUMBERS
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Congratulations, Ty Baisden! Watching you grow Colture and establish yourself as a leader in ownership and innovation has been truly inspiring. Your journey is a testament to hard work, dedication, and visionary leadership. We can't wait to see what the future holds for you and Colture! Keep leading the way and predicting the future of business.

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RICHARD JAMES BURGESS
President/CEO, American Association of Independent Music

A2IM, which lobbies on behalf of its more than 600 indie-label members, has spent the past year "launching bills and collaborating and coordinating with other copyright-focused organizations." One of those pieces of legislation — protecting ticket buyers from price-gouging by mandating full-price disclosure before every sale and banning "speculative" tickets listed by brokers lacking the actual inventory, among other things — passed in the Maryland General Assembly in April. Such legislation represents "significant victories for the greater music ecosystem," Burgess says. "More money in artists' pockets is a win for music, culture and the economy."
BIGGEST ISSUE FACING THE INDIE COMMUNITY "The undermonetization of music via streaming and the lack of good systems to monetize superfans via streaming. Additionally, the lack of clarity around laws limiting generative [artificial intelligence] to ensure that creators and rights holders are adequately protected and compensated."

GEE DAVY
Interim CEO/chief policy officer, Association of Independent Music

Prior to becoming AIM's interim CEO in April following Silvia Montello's exit, former COO Davy had a hand in a wide range of industry initiatives — from the creation of an agreement to improve music metadata based on the United Kingdom's Streaming Inquiry, to the Worldwide Independent Network's AI Principles best practices, to the British government's Streaming Transparency Code of Practice. Of the lattermost, which seeks to streamline digital monetization, Davy says, "My work has ensured the code is practical for all businesses, regardless of scale, type, location or background."
BIGGEST ISSUE "AI models training on uncleared works not only cheat rights holders from crucial licensing income but also generate tracks that compete with recordings across platforms. This poses a significant threat to the livelihoods of artists, songwriters and rights holder businesses."

NOEMÍ PLANAS
CEO, Worldwide Independent Network

WIN has collectively produced a set of principles for generative AI based on five universal tenets — a human-centered approach, safety, respect for copyright, transparency and ethics — and has overhauled its board to reflect its more global approach. "In recent months, we have supported the establishment of new trade associations in Paraguay and Mexico and added India and Bulgaria to our membership," Planas says, adding that WIN "unveiled a new board structure in January that reflects our increasingly diverse membership, with new dedicated blocks for Latin America, Asia, Australasia, Africa and the Middle East."
BIGGEST ISSUE "Market dominance is a major concern. Conditions are being influenced not only by the increased wave of acquisitions and creeping dominance of major record companies but also by the power of digital platforms and streaming services. Independents oppose monopolistic practices and stand as guardians of diversity and creativity."

LVRN recently signed South African *amapiano* DJ duo **TxC**, which has found success with "Turn Off the Lights."

MALWANDLA BIKHOTSO

JEREMY SIROTA
CEO, Merlin

The last year has been busy for the digital rights agency: Not only did it add six new faces to its board (which now spans 12 countries), but Merlin continued to expand and improve its Merlin Engage mentorship program. Tapping into its membership, the program pairs "executive-level mentors with talented mentees ... as a means to help empower the next generation of female leaders in the independent community," Sirota says. Last year, Merlin doubled the size of that program while introducing workshops to assist mentees with "public speaking, time management and executive presence."
BIGGEST ISSUE "Artificial streaming undermines the fair compensation of independent artists and labels, threatening the sustainability of the entire industry. We've taken proactive measures, including the development of cross-functional teams and regular optimization of practices, to combat it."

HELEN SMITH
Executive chair, IMPALA

IMPALA, which represents 6,000 independent music companies spread across 30 countries, has encouraged its members to be sustainable and reduce their carbon footprints since 2021. Smith regards progress made in that area as one of IMPALA's top recent achievements. She ticks off three: "First, our revamped streaming reform proposals; second, our carbon calculator supported by Merlin, followed by our first carbon report; and third, our work with other stakeholders on the [European Union] AI Act, the first legal framework for artificial intelligence anywhere in the world."
BIGGEST ISSUE "Maximizing revenue for artists, which means focusing on reforming streaming in a way that avoids a two-tier approach; making sure European performance monies don't leak out to countries with no domestic rights; and pushing for a joined-up approach on AI across different jurisdictions."

LABELS & DISTRIBUTORS

JUNIA ABAIDOO
Co-founder/head of touring and operations, LVRN
JUSTICE BAIDEN
Co-founder/head of A&R, LVRN
TUNDE BALOGUN
Co-founder/president, LVRN
SEAN "FAMOSO" McNICHOL
Co-founder, LVRN
CARLON RAMONG
Co-founder/creative director, LVRN
AMBER GRIMES
Executive vp/GM, LVRN

LVRN recently signed South African *amapiano* DJ duo TxC and partnered with South African artist agency HGA and producer Tony Duardo (who helped shape Uncle Waffles' breakout debut single, "Tanzania"); Grimes calls the deals "an exciting and essential part of our journey toward becoming a truly global independent company." She cites the "international success" of TxC's "Turn Off the Lights" and HGA artist Ggoldie's "Asambe" as examples of that work paying off. "Tunde Balogun, who sealed the deal, and Jarius 'J.Shep' Sheppard, who oversees the partnership, have been actively involved in South Africa," Grimes adds, "immersing themselves in the music culture to establish a robust infrastructure for local creators to thrive both locally and globally."
BIGGEST ISSUE "The threat of platforms that a lot of independent artists use to level the playing field, visibilitywise, being banned." *—Grimes*

PATRICK AMORY
Co-owner/president, Matador Records
GERARD COSLOY
CHRIS LOMBARDI
Co-owners, Matador Records

Matador remains a hub for both exciting young artists — in 2023, bar italia and Water From Your Eyes made acclaimed debuts with the label — and veteran rock acts like Queens of the Stone Age, whose *In Times New Roman...* launched atop all four *Billboard* rock albums charts last July, and Kim Gordon, whose *The Collective* Cosloy calls an "album of the year candidate." Another success was by a band that hasn't had a new studio set in a quarter-century: "Not for the first time, we're enjoying the incongruity of Pavement having another virtual moment or two that we could not have manufactured," says Cosloy; propelled by TikTok virality, the band scored its first gold record in May with 1999's "Harness Your Hopes." **BEING INDIE MEANS** "You're not cool enough to be metal." —*Cosloy*

NOAH ASSAD
CEO, Rimas Entertainment

Rimas landed at No. 2 on *Billboard*'s Top Latin Labels year-end chart, and marquee artist Bad Bunny was the Top Latin Artist for the fifth straight year. But Rimas' strength goes beyond a single name. The 10-year-old label, known primarily for its urban music roster, also boasts trap star Eladio Carrión (No. 21 on the Top Latin Artists year-end chart), veteran Arcángel (No. 24 on the chart) and newcomer Mora, who in the past three years has placed seven hits on Hot Latin Songs. "I have the honor of saying I work with people who want to work with me and I want to work with them, too," Assad says. "I have a philosophy: I do 30% of the job. If an artist gives 100%, we're at 130%. There's always potential to grow and to develop."

TYRONE "TY" BAISDEN
Head of ventures and innovation, COLTURE
JAYNE ANDREW
Head of creative services, COLTURE

See story, page 48.

GLEN BARROS
Managing partner, Exceleration Music
JOHN BURK
CHARLES CALDAS
AMY DIETZ
DAVE HANSEN
Partners, Exceleration Music

Through acquisitions of such labels as Heroic Music Group and partnerships with +1 Records and Mom + Pop Music, among others, investment fund Exceleration Music has put a stamp on the industry since a diverse collection of indie music veterans founded it in 2021. One particular acquisition, North Carolina-based Redeye Worldwide in September 2023, stands out because it "put us in a position to offer other indie labels both physical and digital distribution services on a global basis," says Caldas, a former CEO of indie rights group Merlin. **BEING INDIE MEANS** "Turning your beliefs and passions into action, regardless of the establishment." —*Caldas*

Rimas Entertainment marquee artist **BAD BUNNY** served as co-chair of the 2024 Met Gala.

TAYLOR HILL/GETTY IMAGES

PHIL BAUER
President, DistroKid

Over 100,000 songs are uploaded to streaming services each day — and DistroKid often facilitates the process. The company says it distributes between 30% and 40% of all new music in the world, including the works of many first-time artists and industry vets, like Ludacris, who want a flexible platform to release music. Recently, DistroKid expanded its offerings by acquiring Bandzoogle, a website builder and direct-to-fan platform for musicians, allowing members to create websites and sell music, merchandise, tickets and more. "Musicians keep 100% of all earnings through both DistroKid and Bandzoogle," Bauer says. To attract even more DIY artists, the company added an Android app in late 2023; combined with its iOS version, the apps account for "20% of all music uploaded to DistroKid," he says.

SCOTT BORCHETTA
Chairman/CEO, Big Machine Label Group
ANDREW KAUTZ
President of label operations, Big Machine Label Group

This year, Big Machine partnered with Dolly Parton's Butterfly Records for the release of her 49th studio album, *Rockstar*, which achieved Parton's biggest first-week sales of the Luminate era, dating to 1991, Borchetta says, noting that she "topped charts she has never even charted on before," including her first No. 1s on Top Rock & Alternative Albums and Top Rock Albums. Borchetta continued the company's push into the genre with the signing of legendary rock outfit Mötley Crüe — "The new music is ferocious," he says — and saw Brett Young's "In Case You Didn't Know" certified diamond by the RIAA, the ninth country song to achieve that level and BMLG's third. **BEING INDIE MEANS** "We're a bit hungrier. We want it all and we want it now — and we're nimble enough to make it happen." —Borchetta

TOM BECCI
CEO, Concord Label Group

Being independent gives Concord the ability to develop artists "without the pressure of the public markets," Becci says. One example is rock band Pierce the Veil on Concord's Fearless Records, which reached No. 1 on *Billboard*'s Alternative Airplay chart in 2023 with "Emergency Contact" and will support blink-182's summer 2024 tour; another is Killer Mike, whose Loma Vista release *Michael* won best rap album at this year's Grammys. "Because we are independent, we have the ability to truly support an artist's long-term vision," Becci adds, and "our philosophy and execution is far more long-term and artist development-focused" than other companies. **BEING INDIE MEANS** "The opportunity to invest in building career artists and creating connections through storytelling and audience-building."

DANA BIONDI
Label partner/artist manager, G*59 Record$

G*59 Record$'s marquee act, $uicideboy$, had a career year in 2023, generating 2.5 million album consumption units in the United States, including 3.4 billion on-demand streams — both peaks for the group, and metrics that have grown each year since its 2016 *Billboard* chart debut. Or, as Biondi puts it, "In 2023, $uicideboy$ were named one of *Billboard*'s top-grossing hip-hop touring artists of all time, one of Spotify's top groups of 2023 and one of SoundCloud's top five most streamed artists." Overall, he adds, the G*59 roster produced 4.5 billion streams in 2023, while the annual Grey Day 2023 Tour grossed $42.9 million across 44 days from 431,000 tickets sold.

"I HAVE THE HONOR OF SAYING I WORK WITH PEOPLE WHO WANT TO WORK WITH ME AND I WANT TO WORK WITH THEM, TOO." —Noah Assad

Dreamville's **J. COLE** achieved his seventh No. 1 on Top R&B/Hip-Hop Albums with *Might Delete Later*.

KEN BUNT
President, Disney Music Group
DAVID ABDO
Senior vp/GM, Disney Music Group
CHIP McLEAN
Senior vp/head of business affairs and development/GM of Disney Concerts Worldwide, Disney Music Group

Led by McLean and his international colleagues, Disney Concerts has spearheaded more than 1,100 performances over the past 12 months, including shows like the Encanto Live-to-Film Concert Experience at the Hollywood Bowl (released on Disney+), a series of Disney Pride chorale concerts and the Disney on Classic Tour, which visited over 50 cities. Elsewhere, Bunt says, TINI put on her first U.S. concerts, while Queen + Adam Lambert completed a "sold-out" North American tour. He adds that the company surpassed 3.5 billion listening hours across streaming and social platforms last year.

BIGGEST ISSUE "The overwhelming volume of releases. More artists than ever have the ability to create and release music, leading to a saturated market. This makes it increasingly difficult for artists to gain visibility and sustain a career." *—Bunt*

DON CANNON
DJ DRAMA
LEIGHTON "LAKESHOW" MORRISON
Co-founders, Generation Now

Generation Now continues to tower over the competition, courtesy of its two superstar signings, Jack Harlow and Lil Uzi Vert. Last year, the latter enjoyed a top 10 single on the Billboard Hot 100 with his Jersey Club-influenced song "Just Wanna Rock." Harlow was also a Hot 100 staple, most notably with "Lovin' on Me," which peaked at No. 1 and reigned for six weeks. In late May, Harlow hosted his first-ever Gazebo Festival in Louisville, Ky., featuring himself, SZA, Pinkpantheress, James Blake and more.

BIGGEST ISSUE "Standing out in a crowded game, while also struggling to earn fair compensation and maintain artistic integrity." *—Cannon*

TROY CARTER
Co-founder/CEO, Venice Music
SUZY RYOO
Co-founder/president, Venice Music

"Breaking new artists and expanding on the success of established artists were primary goals for our team," says Carter, who points to three fast-rising female talents as proof that the strategy is working. Elley Duhé's breakout song, "Money on the Dash" (with Whethan), has been a streaming success; in April, thủy became the first Vietnamese American female solo artist to perform at Coachella; and Philadelphia rapper-singer Lay Bankz landed her first Hot 100 hit in April with "Tell Ur Girlfriend."

BIGGEST ISSUE "Major labels looking to capture more revenue from the [digital service providers] as they lose market share. This will have a major impact on independent artists." *—Carter*

IAIN CATLING
CEO, AudioSalad

Catling is especially proud of "taking AudioSalad into its next phase of growth, in particular global expansion," having run point on its acquisition by SESAC Music Group last March. And while the metadata management and distribution platform launched its own data analytics product that can detect fraudulent activity and stream manipulation, Catling also warns of technology's rapid advancements: "The very thing that initially created more opportunities for indies now presents a more complex, competitive market," he says. "The independent community must fully understand the impact technology brings and equip themselves to navigate the new, challenging environment."

BEING INDIE MEANS "To know that you are building value and equity in yourself, on your terms, without compromise."

THOMAS COESFELD
CEO, BMG
JON LOBA
President of frontline recordings, North America, BMG
THOMAS SCHERER
President of global catalog recorded and music publishing, North America, BMG

BMG has undergone structural and strategic changes since Coesfeld took the reins from longtime CEO Hartwig Masuch last July, including winding down its distribution agreement with Warner Music Group's ADA and striking a physical distribution deal — among other partnerships — with Universal Music Group. And the company is riding high on the country and mainstream success of chart-topping artists Jelly Roll and Lainey Wilson. "These two continue to lead country music in a whole new direction," Loba says. "Our teams [created] a mainstream bridge going in and out of the genre." It's one Loba hopes future artists can travel to find their own crossover success. "It's an exciting time to push the boundaries of convention," he says.

JERMAINE "J. COLE" COLE
Co-founder/partner, Dreamville
IBRAHIM "IB" HAMAD
Co-founder/partner, Dreamville; president, Dreamville Records; manager, J. Cole
ADAM ROY
Co-founder/partner, Dreamville; president, Dreamville Festival/Dreamville Apparel

Dreamville signee JID experienced unexpected success with "Surround Sound," the 21 Savage- and Baby Tate-featuring single from his 2022 album, *The Forever Story*. Thanks to TikTok's viral Ceiling Challenge, "Surround Sound" reached No. 40 on the Hot 100 and earned the rapper his first chart-topper on Rhythmic Airplay in March and highest-charting entry on Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs, peaking at No. 13 nearly two years after its release. J. Cole's surprise mixtape, *Might Delete Later*, debuted at No. 2 on the Billboard 200 and became his seventh No. 1 project on Top R&B/Hip-Hop Albums, while its buzzy Kendrick Lamar dis track, "7 Minute Drill," debuted at No. 6 on the Hot 100 — even after he publicly apologized for it at this year's Dreamville Festival and eventually removed the song from streaming services.

TOMAS COOKMAN
Director, Nacional Records/Latin Alternative Music Conference

"It has been a year of achievements" for Cookman at Nacional Records and the Latin Alternative Music Conference since he reacquired both from Industria Works. In 2023, the LAMC had a "banner year," with 681,000 unique viewers that tuned in to the virtual version of the annual conference last April (up from 580,000 in 2022). The in-person portion of the event, held last July in New York, sold out. On the management side, Cookman's marquee client, Argentine hit-maker Trueno (who landed at No. 10 on *Billboard*'s editorial list of the 50 Best Spanish-Language Rappers of All Time), racked up hundreds of millions of streams before recently scoring a record deal with Sony Music Latin.

BIGGEST ISSUE "Staying competitive in regard to initial investments in artists and projects in the face of more and more players in the various indie spaces."

DENISE TRUSCELLO/GETTY IMAGES

UNIVERSAL MUSIC GROUP CELEBRATES OUR 2024

INDIE POWER PLAYERS

UNIVERSAL

UNIVERSAL MUSIC GROUP

Ángel del Villar's newly launched music distribution company, **DSTRO7**, markets the *música mexicana* group **T3R ELEMENTO**.

MIKE CURB
Owner/chairman, Curb Records

The 60th anniversary of Curb Records in 2024 is the company's "greatest achievement" of late, Curb says, adding that Lee Brice surpassed 1.5 million equivalent album units of his *Hey World* album, for King + Country's *Burn the Ships* went gold and Dylan Scott's second studio album, *Livin' My Best Life*, has nearly gone platinum. Independence itself is also a point of pride for Curb, whose empire includes Word Entertainment; still, he says, indie labels "need to find more new, innovative ways to break new artists to positively impact radio and the charts."

ÁNGEL DEL VILLAR
Founder/CEO, DEL Records

As DEL Records continues to develop new artists, such as latest signee Tony Sucesión, del Villar also launched music distribution company DSTRO7, which licenses directly to DSPs. DSTRO7 now distributes indie labels Tamarindo Rekordsz and Dinero Recio Records, as well as *música mexicana* group T3R Elemento, which is signed exclusively to the company. "Unlike other independent competitors, we are the only ones equipped with this capability, and we are committed to continuing to make a significant impact on the industry," del Villar says about DSTRO7's licenses.
BIGGEST ISSUE "The lack of collaborations between indie artists and those that are signed with major record companies, which is unfortunate because the biggest stars nowadays are independent."

SETH ENGLAND
Partner/CEO, Big Loud
JOEY MOI
Partner/producer/president of A&R, Big Loud
CRAIG WISEMAN
Partner/songwriter, Big Loud
AUSTEN ADAMS
COO, Big Loud
PATCH CULBERTSON
Executive vp/GM, Big Loud Records

It's hard to overstate the impact that Big Loud's Morgan Wallen has had in recent years. His 2023 album, *One Thing at a Time*, was the biggest in the United States last year, with 5.4 million equivalent album units; his January 2021 release, *Dangerous: The Double Album*, was No. 5, with 2.2 million units; and his *One Thing at a Time* single "Last Night" racked up 1 billion U.S. on-demand audio streams in 2023, the most in a calendar year ever and just the second song to surpass 1 billion streams in a calendar year. Coupled with stars like Florida Georgia Line and HARDY, it's little surprise that Big Loud was named *Billboard*'s top country label for 2023.
BEING INDIE MEANS "Being versatile and multifaceted. Independence allows us the freedom to create multiple partnerships and endless opportunities." *—Adams*

JULIUS ERVING III
Founder/CEO, Human Re Sources; executive vp, The Orchard

With all eyes on U.K. singer-songwriter RAYE's growing global presence, Human Re Sources is focusing on breaking her in the U.S. market next. So far, Erving's efforts have been successful: In April, the star performed at the Coachella festival and on *Saturday Night Live*, and she is about to head out for a South American tour. "We have incredibly talented artists on our roster," he says, "and our focus is on developing them to release projects we are proud of."
BEING INDIE MEANS "Being in charge. Whether that's creative or budget — having ownership of your career and the decisions you make is the source of an independent artist's power."

GHAZI
Founder/CEO, EMPIRE
NIMA ETMINAN
COO, EMPIRE
TINA DAVIS
President, EMPIRE
PETER KADIN
Senior vp of marketing, EMPIRE
SUHEL NAFAR
Managing director of WANA, EMPIRE

EMPIRE has established a dominant position in West Africa, but its recent expansion into the rest of the African continent and the Middle East "has proved that we are continuing to build out our global footprint," Kadin says. Closer to home, the company has overseen a breakout year for Shaboozey, the rising country star with whom they first partnered in 2021: He landed two featured spots on Beyoncé's *Cowboy Carter*, and his solo track "A Bar Song (Tipsy)" flew into the top five of the Hot 100 in May.
BEING INDIE MEANS "Establishing a culture of partnership across the board for our artists so that they can be in the driver's seat through every step of their career." *—Kadin*

DANIEL GLASS
Founder/CEO, Glassnote Records
CHRIS SCULLY
GM/CFO, Glassnote Records

Glassnote works hard to maintain its artists' autonomy and foster their evolution, and this year is no different. The company's genre-spanning acts took center stage this past year, as the team worked to spotlight the Mumford & Sons and Pharrell Williams collaboration "Good People," which arrived with a live debut in Paris at the Louis Vuitton Men's FW24 show and hit No. 1 on Triple A Airplay in April. Meanwhile, Latin Grammy best new artist winner Silvana Estrada broke into the mainstream with a nomination for best global music performance at the 2024 Grammys.
BIGGEST ISSUE "The growing reliance on algorithms and AI, which seems to be creating a shrinking desire for in-person artist promotion and engagement." *—Glass*

"INDEPENDENCE ALLOWS US THE FREEDOM TO CREATE MULTIPLE PARTNERSHIPS AND ENDLESS OPPORTUNITIES."
—Austen Adams

DEL RECORDS STUDIOS

Music Will is the largest nonprofit music education program in the US.
Since 2002, we have provided instruments, curriculum, resources, and teacher training to increase equitable access to music education for +1.6 million kids.
Nearly 3.7 million students are still denied access to music education today.
A national network of K-12 districts have adopted the Music Will modern band program in their schools. Our teachers currently serve over 600,000 students in more than 600 cities and towns across the country.
Scan to donate and empower future artists today.
Music Will
musicwill.org/donate/
@musicwill
Voices of Change
We're donating our ad space in *Billboard* to amplify voices of activists, organizations, and charities that reflect our core values and are creating real change.
Our Indie Power Player honorees - Kyle Aycock, MaryLynne Drexler, Cat Kreidich, Samantha Moore, and Adriana Sein - have chosen to spotlight Music Will for working to provide access to music education programming to students in the U.S. public school system.
WARNER MUSIC GROUP

USHER's Super Bowl performance in February coincided with the release of his long-awaited album, *Coming Home.*

MICHAEL GOLDSTONE
Founder/co-owner, Mom + Pop Music
THADDEUS RUDD
Co-owner, Mom + Pop Music

Following a period highlighted by acclaimed new albums from Del Water Gap and MGMT — the latter of which also enjoyed a *Saltburn*-led catalog revival — Goldstone and Rudd are now prepping for much-anticipated new sets from Porter Robinson and Tiny Habits. "With more talent and accessibility than ever before, there's an incredible opportunity for new artistry to thrive and grow," Rudd says of what makes the industry exciting in 2024. "We want to make sure that we continue to develop long-lasting careers in times where attention on artists can sometimes move quickly."

BEING INDIE MEANS "Staying true to artistic integrity and collaboration. We deeply value the relationships that we've built with our artists and take pride in empowering creative freedom." —*Goldstone*

YO GOTTI
Founder/CEO, CMG

Gotti's solo career has taken a back seat to his burgeoning label, CMG. With a robust roster featuring MoneyBagg Yo, 42 Dugg, EST Gee and GloRilla, CMG's lineup remains one of hip-hop's more formidable. This year, GloRilla enjoyed two top 30 Hot 100 singles with "Yeah Glo!" and the Megan Thee Stallion collaboration "Wanna Be," which peaked at No. 11. "The elevation of GloRilla's music and brand in 2024 has been special to watch," Gotti says. "We've worked closely with Glo as she has reinvented herself this year, and the hard work is paying off in a major way with all her momentum."

BIGGEST ISSUE "The lack of artist development. There's too much focus on signing artists based on social media analytics and less of a strategic plan to invest into their growth. Developing superstars requires time, money and patience."

KRISTIN GRAZIANI
President, Stem
SETH FABER
GM, Stem

Last summer, Stem made headlines by raising $250 million in capital for artist advances — and, in the months since, it has put those dollars to work. While continuing to financially back musicians forging careers outside of the traditional major-label machine, the company recently unveiled a new product, Tone, which simplifies royalty tracking and payouts for users. Among its artist success stories in the past year is pop band LANY, whose single "XXL" logged 17 weeks on the Pop Airplay chart and appeared on the inaugural TikTok Billboard Top 50 list.

BIGGEST ISSUE "The enchanting temptation to abandon proper artist development in an environment where attention spans are increasingly more ephemeral." —*Faber*

SUNG SOO HAN
Master professional, PLEDIS Entertainment

Although Seventeen debuted nearly a decade ago, the K-pop group has hit a new commercial stride recently, scoring a pair of No. 2 debuts on the Billboard 200 with its 2023 EPs *FML* and *Seventeenth Heaven*, as well as touring stadiums across Asia over the past year. And while Seventeen remains PLEDIS' flagship act, Han says that the company "further diversified and enriched the landscape of K-pop" this year with the debut of boy band TWS in early 2024.

BIGGEST ISSUE "Generative AI's potential influence on creativity. The beauty of being an indie creator ultimately comes down to sharing the entire creative journey with fans. I hope the indie community contemplates how human creators can coexist with the advantages of AI technology, ensuring that this shared journey and the value of creation remains intact."

SHAWN HOLIDAY
Co-founder, Giant Music
NATE ALBERT
President, Giant Music
MATT LaMOTTE
Executive vp of marketing/managing director, Giant Music

The Azoff Company-owned label, launched in 2022, brought on Mighty Mighty Bosstones co-founder and accomplished A&R veteran Albert as president in January, adding him to an impressive executive roster that includes former Columbia co-head of urban music Holiday and longtime marketing whiz LaMotte. This past year, they've had big success with Cash Cobain, whose breakout single, "Fisherr," is "the culmination of all of his creative brilliance and the hard work put in by his whole team," the trio said in a statement. "Streaming, social, press, radio, live events and the right co-signs have helped us elevate him to the place we always knew he should be."

MICHAEL HOWARD
Associate vp of global operations, Redeye
LAURA PITTARD
Global marketing director, Redeye
HANK STOCKARD
Global business development director, Redeye

Redeye, which is committed to expanding global marketing, spent the past year working particularly on improving its digital, logistics and distribution services to best serve its independent label partners and customers, Stockard says. That extends to a commitment to focusing "on the art at the forefront of everything we do to ensure listeners have access to a healthy and sustainable independent music community where fans can discover and support creators with a direct connection."

BIGGEST ISSUE "Creating a sustainable space for artists, labels, retailers and distributors by balancing the desire to provide fans with high-quality products and artist engagement experiences with the economic reality of rising costs for physical goods and marketing services." —*Stockard*

LARRY JACKSON
Co-founder/CEO, gamma.
IKE YOUSSEF
Co-founder/president, gamma.

Since its March 2023 launch, gamma., which purchased indie distributor Vydia, has logged several impressive wins. Chief among them was Usher's epic Super Bowl performance in February, as well as two Adult R&B Airplay No. 1s — "Good Good" with 21 Savage and Summer Walker and "Risk It All" with H.E.R. — from his long-awaited album, *Coming Home*. And Sexyy Red continued to pound her way to fame with a cameo on Drake's "Rich Baby Daddy," a stellar turn at Rolling Loud California and a top 20 Hot 100 hit in "Get It Sexyy." Citing Rick Ross and Meek Mill's joint album, *Too Good To Be True*, as well, Jackson says, "Our market share has grown substantially and quite rapidly based on the output and success of such releases."

BIGGEST ISSUE "Getting [a] fair piece of the pro-rata pool from DSPs." —*Jackson*

KEVIN MAZUR/GETTY IMAGES

Disney Music Group congratulates
Ken Bunt, **David Abdo** & **Chip McLean**
on being named as honorees to the
Billboard 2024 **Indie Power Players** List.

© Disney

DANIEL JANG
Co-CEO, SM Entertainment

DMITRY YJ TAK
Co-CEO/IP executive, SM Entertainment

SM Entertainment has enjoyed an immensely successful year under its newly implemented SM 3.0 strategy, representing top K-pop acts such as aespa and NCT Dream — both of whom had success with their respective albums *My World* and *ISTJ*. Like rostermates NCT 127, those groups embarked on global tours in 2023. The agency also oversaw the debuts of NCT Wish and RIIZE, whose track "Get a Guitar" appeared on *Billboard*'s editorial list of the 25 Best K-Pop Songs of 2023. "As we look ahead, we are thrilled to continue pushing boundaries, setting new records and shaping the future of music," Jang and Tak said in a joint statement.

GORDON KERR
President/CEO, Black River Entertainment

RICK FROIO
Executive vp, Black River Records

Black River artist Kelsea Ballerini's acclaimed 2023 EP, *Rolling Up the Welcome Mat*, reached No. 11 on *Billboard*'s Top Country Albums chart and earned her a Grammy nomination for best country album and a Country Music Association Awards nod for album of the year. In February, she re-signed with Black River. In 2023, the label also added Scotty Hasting to its roster. Kerr says one of the biggest issues facing the independent community is "recognition. Indies can help artists grow as well as the majors."
BEING INDIE MEANS "Focus, tenacity and the power of being flexible to help our artists celebrate their art." —*Kerr*

WALTER KOLM
President/CEO, WK Entertainment; founder, WK Records

Kolm's monumental year was marked by global breakthroughs like Los Esquivel's "Alucín," which spent eight weeks on the Hot Latin Songs chart and earned the sibling duo a nomination for new artist, group or duo, Mexican music at the 2024 Premios Lo Nuestro. Meanwhile, Emilia and Ludmilla struck gold with "No_se_ve.mp3," which racked up 383 million official on-demand global streams. "The collaboration forged a first-of-its-kind partnership with Meta under the label's direction for the music video," Kolm says, adding that it was the first time a video "premiered exclusively via IG Reels," garnering "multiple certifications in the U.S., Spain and Argentina" along the way.

CAT KREIDICH
President, ADA

KYLE AYCOCK
CFO, ADA

ADRIANA SEIN
Global head of artist and market development, ADA

SAMANTHA MOORE
Head of business operations and development, ADA

MARYLYNNE DREXLER
Head of business and legal affairs, ADA

Scoring hits such as Artemas' "I Like the Way You Kiss Me" (a 10K Projects track that hit No. 1 on the Billboard Global Excl. U.S. chart) and The K's' debut album, *I Wonder If the World Knows?* (a LAB release that reached No. 2 on the U.K. Official Albums chart), Warner Music Group's independent distribution division has "never felt more in sync," Kreidich says. "The increasing strength of our global teams helped deliver multiple chart-topping results around the world," she adds, citing Mexico's Bellakath and Germany's AYLIVA as proof.
BEING INDIE MEANS "Calling the shots, from how your music sounds to how your brand looks and feels. We like to think of our artists as the CEOs of their own businesses, giving them the freedom to carve out their own path." —*Kreidich*

LOS ESQUIVEL's "Alucín" spent eight weeks on the Hot Latin Songs chart.

DAVID BECKER/GETTY IMAGES

DENIS LADEGAILLERIE
Founder/CEO, Believe

ANDREEA GLEESON
CEO, TuneCore

Believe has continued to have success internationally, with a 29% market share in its native France, a global Spotify No. 1 song with Spain's Iñigo Quintero and the launch of hip-hop label Playcode in Japan. In the United States, TuneCore's new Accelerator program aims to provide artists at all stages of their careers promotional and marketing tools; Gleeson says over 80,000 have enrolled, and nearly 10,000 of them boosted their quarterly streams by an average of 143%, helping TuneCore pass the $4 billion milestone in artist payouts since 2006.
BEING INDIE MEANS "Supporting artists, respecting their will to be in control and in the decision-making seat, perfectly understanding their needs and adapting our services to them." —*Ladegaillerie*

FEDERICO LAURIA
Founder/CEO, Dale Play

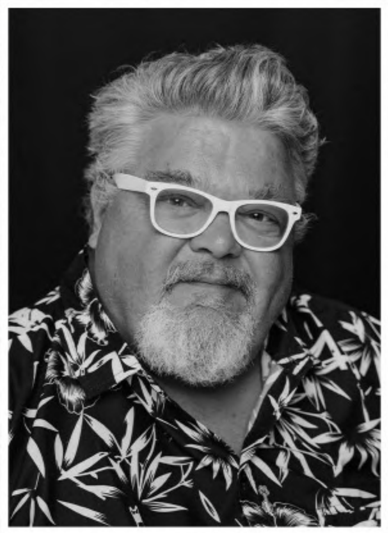
Dale Play's remarkable growth across management, records, live entertainment, gaming and publishing is exemplified by Duki, who sold out Madrid's Santiago Bernabeu Stadium for his June 8 show as early as January, following a massive turnout of over 150,000 at Buenos Aires' River Plate Stadium. Additionally, Bizarrap won three Latin Grammys in 2023 for his "Bzrp Music Sessions, Vol. 52" and "Vol. 53" with Quevedo and Shakira, respectively, and performed at Coachella in April. The label further expanded its reach by signing superstar Paulo Londra, while its touring division has sold over 1.5 million tickets in Latin America for major tours with artists like Karol G, Maná and Alejandro Sanz.
BIGGEST ISSUE "AI is a revolution of a magnitude I don't think we've faced before. Being able to adapt to this constantly changing reality and helping artists and teams to navigate it is the most important challenge we face."

"WE LIKE TO THINK OF OUR ARTISTS AS THE CEOs OF THEIR OWN BUSINESSES, GIVING THEM THE FREEDOM TO CARVE OUT THEIR OWN PATH." —Cat Kreidich

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2024 billboard

INDIE LABEL POWER PLAYERS

SETH ENGLAND



CRAIG WISEMAN

JOEY MOI

PATCH CULBERTSON

AUSTEN ADAMS

BIG LOUD

K-pop group **TWICE**'s album *With YOU-th* reached No. 1 on the Billboard 200 in part through the efforts of Imperial, the independent distribution division of Republic Records.

WEISS EUBANKS/NBCUNIVERSAL/GETTY IMAGES

EMMY LOVELL
Global head of music, SoundCloud

MAURICE SLADE
Head of marketing and artist partnerships, SoundCloud

"The sheer volume of incredible artists with zero plays is an issue that keeps me up at night," Lovell says. That's part of the reason why the company launched its Next Pro music chart in November, further spotlighting unknown talent before other streaming platforms do. According to Lovell, the 50-song list is designed to provide independent acts a sense of achievement, boost their resources and offer "an opportunity for discovery that can help put them on the radar of new fans, tour promoters, festivals and awards."

BEING INDIE MEANS "Complete control for the artists who want that and, as a result, more money in their pockets from the generated revenue." —*Lovell*

JUSTIN LUBLINER
Owner/CEO, The Darkroom

Lubliner defines being indie as "pushing boundaries," a quality he shares with the artists on his roster, all of whom are set for busy years ahead. In January, John Summit sold out his first Madison Square Garden show ahead of releasing his debut album this summer; alternative artist d4vd scored a major synch with "Feel It" for Amazon Prime Video's animated series *Invincible*; and the label's biggest star, Billie Eilish, released her third album, *Hit Me Hard and Soft*, in May. Her project followed a winning awards season with "What Was I Made For?" from the *Barbie* soundtrack, which won the Academy Award for best original song and the Grammy for song of the year.

DAVID MACIAS
Co-founder/president, Thirty Tigers

Over the past five years, Thirty Tigers has experienced significant growth in international markets, quadrupling its billing outside the United States as a result of the company's broader approach to A&R. Macias also says he's "proud of our work on the social justice front. We were helpful in [organizer] Allison Russell's efforts in the important Love Rising concert this past year, and we look forward to supporting her efforts moving forward."

BEING INDIE MEANS "Being able to do what moves you if and when the spirit calls. Though we do have to keep an eye on the bottom line, of course, being able to follow our muse to a large degree makes it a more rewarding professional environment."

TERRY McBRIDE
CEO, Nettwerk Music Group

SIMON MORTIMER-LAMB
President/COO, Nettwerk Music Group

Working releases from artists such as Passenger, Paris Paloma and SYML, Nettwerk has spent the last 18 months building a model around fan-connected artist communities. "Rather than solely relying on traditional promotion or genre-based marketing, we harness the power of audience affinities and behavioral patterns to build shared success across our artist communities," Mortimer-Lamb says. "We leverage data science to understand audience engagement and maximize success through a full suite of artist development services. From online engagement strategies to retail marketing and everything in between, we've tailored our approach to leverage the power of music scenes and artist communities."

BEING INDIE MEANS "Being passionate about the artist and their vision, having patience and perseverance, being great listeners and showing devotion to getting it right for the artist and staying nimble and perpetually iterating to improve your results." —*Mortimer-Lamb*

GLENN MENDLINGER
President, Imperial

Since launching in 2021 as Republic Records' independent distribution division, Imperial has created a lasting footprint in indie music with a little help from industry juggernauts. Thanks to ongoing partnerships with multinational entertainment groups HYBE and JYP, which Mendlinger describes as "amazing partners and pioneers in the new music landscape," Imperial has helped deliver a series of Billboard 200-topping projects in the last 18 months from K-pop acts including Stray Kids (*Rock-Star*, *5-STAR*), TWICE (*With YOU-th*) and Tomorrow X Together (*The Name Chapter: Temptation*).

BIGGEST ISSUE "The massive volume of releases and distribution companies who offer no services or support."

MARTIN MILLS
Chairman, Beggars Group

NABIL AYERS
President, Beggars Group

ALYSSA DEBONIS
U.S. label manager, 4AD

MELANIE SHEEHAN
GM, Rough Trade Records

CLAIRE TAYLOR
GM, Beggars U.S.

Ayers describes Beggars Group's 2023 as "perhaps the most musically diverse period in the company's history," thanks to Peggy Gou's global dance hit, "(It Goes Like) Nanana," along with "successful records" in many other genres, from jazz saxophonist Kamasi Washington to Tuareg guitar great Mdou Moctar. In addition, Queens of the Stone Age cracked the top 10 on the Billboard 200 with a new album and scored a pair of rock Grammy nominations, while Romy earned one for best dance/electronic recording. There are more where these came from — Ayers is thrilled by "the abundance of exciting new artists" in the independent community.

BEING INDIE MEANS "Contributing to an ecosystem that values long-term relationships with artists." —*Ayers*

JEREMEL "DADDYO" MOORE
CEO, Paper Route Empire

Even after Key Glock's third album, *Glockoma 2*, debuted at No. 13 on the Billboard 200 in March 2023, the PRE star remained prolific, releasing a deluxe that June, which earned him his first Hot 100 hit with "Let's Go." Peaking at No. 59, "Let's Go" further solidified Key Glock as an integral fixture among PRE's roster of artists, well after the death of his mentor and cousin, Young Dolph, whose music continues to put up big numbers posthumously, with more than 450 million U.S. on-demand streams in 2024 alone through mid-May. "I have worked diligently with the team to create a robust system that continues to add value to our artists," Moore says, "ensuring ongoing success and development."

JT MYERS
NAT PASTOR
Co-CEOs, Virgin Music Group

JACQUELINE SATURN
President of North America/executive vp of artist relations, Virgin Music Group

ZACK GERSHEN
Executive vp of global commercial and digital strategy, Virgin Music Group

Pastor says four of Virgin Music Group's top five songs over the past year — Rema and Selena Gomez's "Calm Down," Jungkook's "Seven" (featuring Latto), Jimin's "Like Crazy" and Eslabon Armado and Peso Pluma's "Ella Baila Sola" — came from outside the United States or were recorded in a language other than English. "That's an awesome reflection of our global business," Pastor says, adding that the company has "spent the past year centralizing our global team" — a reference to the October announcement of Virgin's leadership, with executives' responsibilities split across five regions as part of Universal Music Group's artist services consolidation.

BEING INDIE MEANS "Being an entrepreneur — defining success for oneself and taking on the responsibility for achieving it. Having to do more with less drives creativity and ingenuity." —*Pastor*

THE BUTTERFLY CONTINUES TO MIGRATE

MNRK™ MUSIC GROUP

CONGRATS TO OUR LEADER, CHRIS TAYLOR

AND THE INCREDIBLE TEAM AND ARTISTS AT MNRK!

"WE CAN ALLOW SPACE FOR ARTISTS TO STAY TRUE TO WHO THEY ARE CREATIVELY WHILE MAKING MUSIC THAT IS AUTHENTIC TO THEIR VISION."
—Lynne Oliver-Cline

BRAD NAVIN
CEO, The Orchard
COLLEEN THEIS
President/COO, The Orchard
MARY ASHLEY JOHNSON
Executive vp of sales and artist and label management, U.S. and Canada, The Orchard
ALAN BECKER
Senior vp of artist and label partnerships, The Orchard

Theis calls RAYE, who enjoyed a breakout hit in 2023 with the 070 Shake-assisted "Escapism" through Human Re Sources, her "hero" — and "a testament to what independent artists can achieve when empowered by the right team." "Escapism" climbed to No. 22 on the Hot 100, and RAYE took home "a record-breaking six BRIT Awards" this year. But while Theis is pleased "the indie community is enjoying mainstream success," she's wary of getting "comfortable or complacent." "Artists and industry professionals alike need to remember what got us here," she says. "The love of new artist discovery, agility, curiosity [and] venturing into uncharted waters."
BEING INDIE MEANS "Keeping an entrepreneurial mindset, being nimble, continuing to learn and evolve, and nurturing fair and meaningful partnerships that stay true to the artistic vision." —*Theis*

PATRICK NORTH
U.S. label head, XL Recordings/Young

XL added to its roster of indie megastars such as Adele and Radiohead by signing South Korean DJ-producer Peggy Gou, whose "(It Goes Like) Nanana" hit No. 33 on the Billboard Global 200 in September, and Irish club-rockers Fontaines D.C. Romy, a member of Young veterans The xx, earned a 2024 Grammy nomination for her dance hit with Fred again.., "Strong." North says his focus is on "helping artists who put their music and craft first find a balance with the extraordinary demands of social media and promotion."
BEING INDIE MEANS "The freedom to make decisions that are creative first and foremost."

JAMIE OBORNE
Founder/CEO, Dirty Hit

Dirty Hit has enjoyed another period of expansion since 2023 kicked off, even bringing Bleachers — superstar producer Jack Antonoff's band — into the fold. But the label remains focused on the growth of signature act The 1975, which continues to sell out arenas around the world, with over 2 million in ticket sales between its recent At Their Very Best and Still... At Their Very Best treks. "I am very proud that the company we have built can offer an artist stability, creative freedom and access to growth without compromise," Oborne says. "That, to me, is real success."
BEING INDIE MEANS "Uncompromising creative freedom."

LONNY OLINICK
CEO, AWAL
PETE GIBERGA
President, AWAL
BIANCA BHAGAT
GM, AWAL

With the Grammy-winning album *Bewitched* by jazz-pop sensation Laufey, the viral smashes "Back on 74" by Jungle and "End of Beginning" by Djo, and the critical success of *Drop 7* by British rapper Little Simz, AWAL has proved it can go toe-to-toe with the major labels by doing things its own way. Olinick says that with AWAL's flexible deal offerings ranging from distribution to full label services, its artists are intent on "building a real fan base," which "is done over years, with the artist putting in the work of becoming the best at their craft. It requires riding out extreme lows in the pursuit of creating better and better art."
BEING INDIE MEANS "Artists who are empowered to make all the key decisions around their careers: make the music they want to make, put it out when they want to, speak to their fans however they choose and own their life's work." —*Olinick*

LYNN OLIVER-CLINE
Founder/owner, River House Artists
ZEBB LUSTER
GM/vp, River House Artists

Over the past year, River House has diversified its roster across various genres and fostered growth for its acts, including Austin Snell, the first artist in the company's joint venture with Warner Music Nashville. River House recently signed celebrated songwriter Dean Dillon to a global publishing deal and has had viral moments for Western rapper Ryan Charles' "Cold Beer Diet." Meanwhile, Knox has a top 20 Pop Airplay hit with "Not The 1975" and will play Lollapalooza's main stage this year. "It's a great time to be an indie label," Oliver-Cline says, "because we can allow space for artists to stay true to who they are creatively while making music that is authentic to their vision."
BIGGEST ISSUE "Finding ways to stand out in this crowded space. What used to be nontraditional methods exclusive to indie labels have now become the norm for everyone." —*Oliver-Cline*

JASON PETERSON
Chairman/CEO, GoDigital Media Group
BARRY DAFFURN
Co-founder, Cinq Music

Last year, Cinq Music landed several new initiatives and large deals, including the launch of a new Nashville office, the closing of a $300 million fund for the acquisition of music intellectual property (which led to the purchase of late producer Flow La Movie's catalog) and signing a deal with Fuerza Regida's Street Mob Records. Earlier this year, Cinq raised another $250 million from parent company GoDigital Media Group to fund further acquisitions of music rights, "which will allow the company to continue its trajectory as a major global independent music company driving large and fast-growing music genres forward, including reggaetón and música mexicana," Daffurn says.
BIGGEST ISSUE "A trend where content is a loss leader for companies like Amazon, Apple, ByteDance, Google and Meta. Music is vastly undervalued at these platforms and used to create a larger customer lifetime value, from which we receive nothing." —*Daffurn*

South Korean DJ-producer **PEGGY GOU** reached No. 33 on the Billboard Global 200 in September with "(It Goes Like) Nanana."

MARK SAGLIOCCO/GETTY IMAGES

Congratulations, Indie Power Player

Tom Becci

Thank you for your remarkable dedication to great artists, their careers, and their fans around the world

INDIE POWER PLAYERS 2024

TINASHE made her Coachella debut in April and has released the single "Nasty" ahead of her forthcoming album, *BB/Ang3l Pt. 2 — Quantum Baby*.

EMMA MCINTYRE/GETTY IMAGES

JESUS ORTIZ PAZ
CEO, Street Mob Records

"It's not easy to be successful in the indie community," Ortiz Paz admits, "but everything is possible." This past year, the lead singer of Fuerza Regida and CEO of Street Mob Records is proud of not only the growth and success of his own chart-topping band but also the rise of his label's regional Mexican artists that include Chino Pacas, Calle 24, Ángel Ureta, Chuy Montana and Linea Personal. "Being a part of the journey and helping young artists make their dreams come true is why we do what we do," he says.

BEING INDIE MEANS "Everything, because it gives us the opportunity to help anybody make their dreams come true, just like mine did with Fuerza Regida."

ELI PICCARRETA
Senior vp of A&R, Artist Partner Group

Artist Partner Group is on a roll, thanks to a boost from breakout producer Odetari, who in 2023 landed three straight top 10 singles on *Billboard*'s Hot Dance/Electronic Songs, including the genre-blending dance hit with 6arelyhuman, "GMFU," which has racked up 145.9 million U.S. on-demand streams. "As an independent label, we accumulated almost 4 billion streams last year and are on track to crush that in 2024," Piccarreta says. Other artists contributing to APG's success include Lay Bankz, who topped the TikTok Billboard Top 50 chart with "Tell Ur Girlfriend" in May.

BIGGEST ISSUE "Perception. Some people might assume that independent labels don't have real funding or the capabilities to release music in impactful ways — that is not the case."

PESO PLUMA
GEORGE PRAJIN
Co-founders, Double P Records

Last year, Peso and Prajin, the Mexican hit-maker's manager, jointly launched Double P Records, which The Orchard distributes globally. Home to emerging acts like Jasiel Nuñez and Tito Double P, the imprint released Peso's *Génesis* last summer, which made history by peaking at No. 3 on the Billboard 200, the highest ranking for a regional Mexican music album in the chart's history. *Génesis* also won a Grammy for best música mexicana album. "We have been able to push the genre to places no one thought possible," Prajin says, adding of his marquee artist: "His versatility and talent assured that he wasn't just a one-hit wonder."

BIGGEST ISSUE "Artists who jump into running their own labels without proper structure, information or personnel." *—Prajin*

JONATHAN PONEMAN
Co-founder, Sub Pop
MEGAN JASPER
CEO, Sub Pop
TONY KIEWEL
Co-president, Sub Pop

The iconic Seattle indie label, which turns 36 this year, finds itself "more inspired than ever by the incredible talent of the artists we work with and the overwhelming dedication and passion of our team," says Kiewel, who counts releases from acts like METZ, Amen Dunes, Iron & Wine, J Mascis, Washed Out, Shabazz Palaces, Man Man, La Luz, Pissed Jeans, Weyes Blood and Bully as some of the label's best output for the year. "We were also honored to celebrate newly platinum-certified singles from Father John Misty and Suki Waterhouse, along with the multiplatinum status for Beach House's 'Space Song,' " he adds.

LOUIS POSEN
Founder/CEO, Hopeless Records
IAN HARRISON
GM, Hopeless Records

The Van Nuys, Calif.-based punk, indie and hardcore label is celebrating its 30th anniversary this year with a museum-style exhibit that will appear at A2IM's Indie Week, the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame and The Punk Rock Museum. Showcasing over 1,000 artifacts, "it chronicles our journey through iconic Hopeless artists such as Avenged Sevenfold, All Time Low and Sum 41, alongside our current roster headliners Neck Deep, PVRIS, Destroy Boys and more," Harrison explains. "But we are just getting started. The history that the next generation will celebrate is being created by our artists today."

BEING INDIE MEANS "Freedom to invest in any artists early and over a long period of time. Freedom to believe in cultures and genres that are underground or viewed as unprofitable. Freedom to make the right decisions for an artist's career and not for keeping a job or quarterly earnings. Freedom to let purpose, principles and passion drive decisions." *—Harrison*

RICKY REED
Founder/CEO, Nice Life Recording Company
LARRY WADE
Co-owner/COO, Nice Life Recording Company

After spearheading a global campaign for Lizzo that culminated in the superstar winning record of the year at the 2023 Grammys for her Hot 100-topping "About Damn Time," Nice Life is applying that playbook to the wide range of artists on its roster. In the last year, the company has signed new talent including TisaKorean and Ambar Lucid, helped Tinashe launch her first Coachella performance in 2024 and successfully promoted the work of fast-rising cumbia singer Estevie. It's a return to form for the company, according to Reed: "It's a passion to lift up voices that are not in the mainstream conversation," he says, "to always champion the underdog."

BEING INDIE MEANS "Having the freedom to be bold but also a responsibility to serve the community around us, without which we wouldn't be here." *—Reed*

LUIS SÁNCHEZ
Co-founder/CEO, AfinArte Music

Sánchez highlights the development of a new generation of artists that has achieved millions of streams across platforms, including Los Mismos de la M, La Cuadrilla and Diego de la Rosca, along with the continuous success of the company's stars El Fantasma, Los Dos Carnales, Gerardo Díaz and Voz de Mando. "Our team has built a sterling reputation for discovering and nurturing promising new talent," he says, "resulting in a meticulously curated, award-winning roster that has accumulated billions of streams and YouTube views to date."

BIGGEST ISSUE "Streaming platforms and social media have created an insatiable demand for new music. This puts indie artists and labels in a difficult position, as they must produce high-quality content at an accelerated pace to stay relevant and meet the expectations of their audience."

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The Orchard congratulates our colleagues and partners on their esteemed recognition.

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2024 INDIE POWER PLAYERS

BRAD NAVIN
COLLEEN THEIS
MARY ASHLEY JOHNSON
ALAN BECKER

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Source Music's **LE SSERAFIM** landed its first Hot 100 hit with "Easy" and reached the Billboard 200 top 10 for the second time with its EP of the same name.

MATT WINKELMEYER/GETTY IMAGES

MICKEY SÁNCHEZ
Vp, Rancho Humilde

Already an indie powerhouse of the new Mexican music movement in the United States, Rancho Humilde opened an office in Mexico in November, "strategically expanding our territorial footprint and unlocking a plethora of new opportunities," Sánchez says, including high-grossing tours for top acts Natanael Cano, Junior H and Fuerza Regida. Sánchez also spearheaded a campaign to capture radio airplay for Rancho Humilde artists who have long thrived on digital exposure alone and secured three Latin Airplay No. 1s for Fuerza Regida, including smash hit "Bebe Dame" with Grupo Frontera, significantly heightening brand visibility.
BEING INDIE MEANS "Being more focused on signing quality, not quantity, and being a little bit more picky in choosing just what you are really interested in."

YOUNG JAE SHIN
Master president, BIGHIT Music

BIGHIT Music doubled down on the stars that make up global supergroup BTS with three members — Jungkook, Jimin and Suga's alter ego, Agust D — releasing solo debuts in 2023. Jungkook and Jimin earned RIAA platinum certifications for selling over 1 million units of "Seven" (featuring Latto) and "Like Crazy," respectively, and Agust D's *D-Day* ruled *Billboard*'s Top Album Sales chart. BIGHIT also focused on "leveraging [Tomorrow X Together's] rising status in the global market ... [to sell out] shows of their second world tour," including two at Los Angeles' BMO Stadium, in addition to a headlining slot at Lollapalooza.
BEING INDIE MEANS "The potential to pioneer fresh trends by thinking innovatively, stepping outside the box and fearlessly experimenting with entirely new approaches yet to be explored."

"YOU ALWAYS HAVE TO BE AGGRESSIVE AND BE THINKING ONE STEP AHEAD OF EVERYONE ELSE."
—Paul Sizelove

PAUL SIZELOVE
President, Gaither Music Group

Gaither has "achieved significant milestones" in growing its reach and impact within music and media, Sizelove says, including through its distribution deal with Virgin Music Label & Artists Services/Capitol Christian Music Group to cover master recordings and publishing. "This alliance underscores our commitment to providing a platform for our artists to share their music with audiences worldwide," he says. Another notable achievement is this year's launch of music company Sun Label Group under Primary Wave, which combines the legacies of Gaither, Sun Records, Green Hill Music and emeraldwave by Green Hill into "a cohesive and forward-thinking musical conglomerate."
BEING INDIE MEANS "Fiercely embracing creativity and always being open to change. When you're an independent, you're an entrepreneur. You always have to be aggressive and be thinking one step ahead of everyone else."

SUNG JIN SO
Master professional, Source Music

In the last year, "my focus revolved around propelling Le Sserafim to global stardom," So says. The Source Music/HYBE/Geffen Records group has inked significant collaborations with Blizzard Entertainment to become *Overwatch 2*'s first-ever in-game musical artist and announced a multiyear collaboration with the NBA to headline the league's celebrity and influencer program in Asia. On the charts, Le Sserafim landed its first Hot 100 single with "Easy," and the K-pop girl group reached the Billboard 200 top 10 for the second time with its EP of the same name.
BIGGEST ISSUE "As K-pop continues to be driven primarily by a dedicated core audience of fans rather than a broader, more mainstream appeal, we need to generate content that can fortify core audiences and attract lighter fandoms that will naturally lead to wider public attention."

STEVE STOUTE
Founder/CEO, UnitedMasters

DAVID MELHADO
Vp of music and marketing, UnitedMasters

MICHAEL WEISS
Vp of music/head of A&R, UnitedMasters

Melhado says the company attributes its "significant growth" over the past 18 months in part to striking new partnerships with artists such as Brent Faiyaz, Earthgang and Anycia while also intensifying its focus on artist development, citing BigXthaPlug and Ekkstacy as examples. Also noteworthy is the company's international expansion through foundational partnerships with Davido and Sarz in Nigeria; Veigh, Nagalli and Supernova in Brazil; and FloyyMenor and Nickoog Clk in Chile. "With these achievements," Melhado says, "we're well positioned to empower the next generation of independent talent at every phase of their career."
BIGGEST ISSUE "In today's music landscape, cultivating a dedicated fan base has become paramount. Independent artists must adopt a small-business mindset, prioritizing fan engagement and a loyal community, and diversifying revenue beyond streaming." *—Melhado*

JONATHAN STRAUSS
Co-founder/CEO, Create Music Group

ALEXANDRE WILLIAMS
Co-founder/COO, Create Music Group

WAYNE HAMPTON
Co-founder/chief business development officer, Create Music Group

Strauss says CMG-distributed artists doubled their streams over the past 12 months, with the group's publishing division having a hand in nearly one-third of the songs on the Hot 100 from week to week. He also notes that CMG's joint ventures have found labels such as Lowly and Broke breaking into the indie market thanks to developing acts such as LXNGVX. "Via organic growth and acquisition, we've built an owned audience of more than 400 million followers across all social media platforms," he says of the audience to whom CMG can directly market its clients' music.

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PLAYERS
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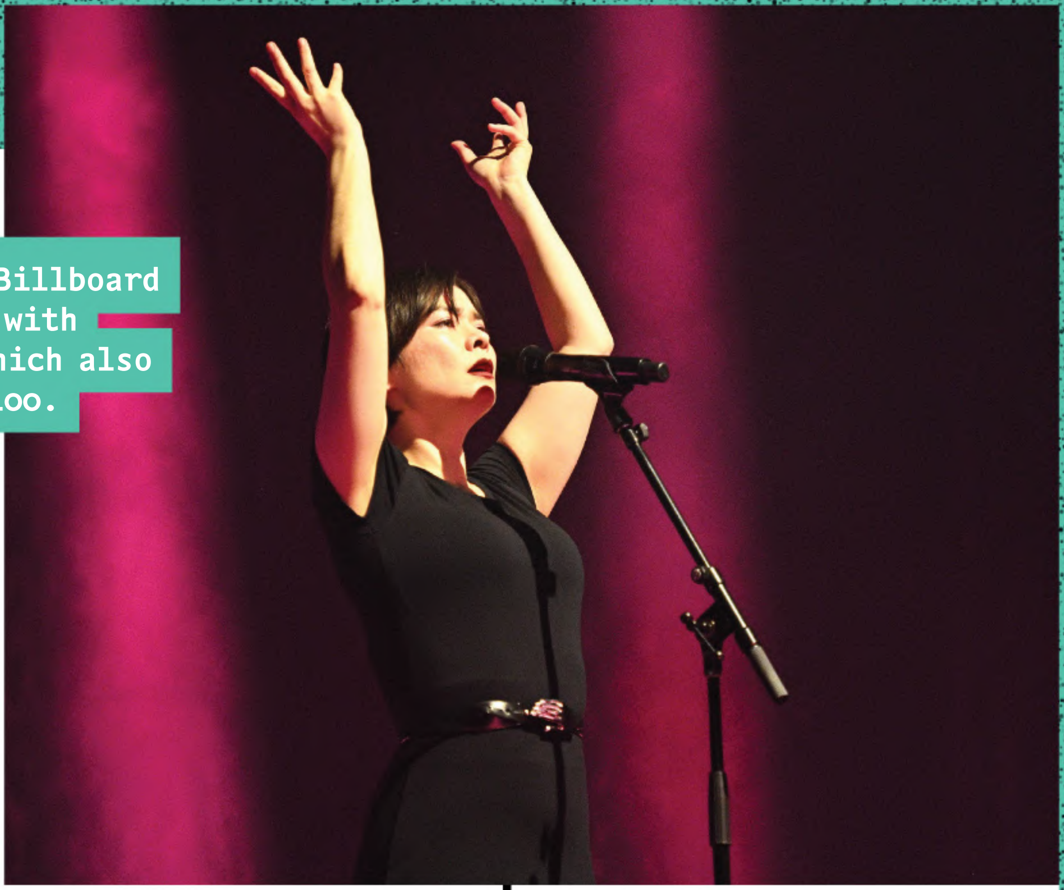
DEL VILLAR
CEO, DEL RECORDS
15
2009-2024
Anniversary
DEL RECORDS
DEL RECORDS
DSTR07



MITSKI topped the TikTok Billboard Top 50 chart for six weeks with "My Love Mine All Mine," which also reached No. 26 on the Hot 100.

GUS STEWART/REDFERNS

BEN SWANSON
Co-founder/COO, Secretly Group
CHRIS SWANSON
Co-founder/president of A&R, Secretly Group
PHIL WALDORF
Co-founder/chief marketing officer, Secretly Group
ROBBY MORRIS
Vp of creative, Secretly Group
JESSICA PARK
Global label director, Secretly Group
EMILY PUTERBAUGH
Director of streaming and digital sales, Secretly Group

As Secretly Group expanded with new offices in Paris, Berlin, Amsterdam and Sydney, Mitski (Dead Oceans) went similarly global in 2023 thanks to "My Love Mine All Mine," which became "a top 10 streaming song on Spotify in countries throughout North America, Europe, [the Middle East and Africa], Southeast Asia, Australia and beyond," Waldorf says. A six-week No. 1 on the TikTok Billboard Top 50 chart (and a top 30 hit on the Hot 100), "it is a song that has traveled everywhere," he adds. "The exponential growth of Mitski on her seventh album is a huge achievement."

BIGGEST ISSUE "The sheer volume of choices fans are faced with every day, from more music being released than ever to more entertainment options than ever diverting attention away from music, is a huge challenge. It's harder and harder to cut through the noise and do great artist development in a hypercompetitive marketplace." —*Waldorf*

DEAN TABAAC
Head of AMPED Distribution
JOCELYNN PRYOR
Vp of marketing, AMPED Distribution

Pryor says that among physical distributor AMPED's big wins over the past year is a No. 1 debut on the Billboard 200 for K-pop act ATEEZ, as well as 76 indie exclusives for the 2024 Record Store Day and 24 Grammy nominations for 19 artists who used AMPED, including four wins, at the 2024 awards. The stellar year has continued with what she calls the "meteoric rise to stardom" of Shaboozey, who recently hit No. 1 on Hot Country Songs with "A Bar Song (Tipsy)." AMPED also struck a physical distribution agreement with Vydia to release the 30th-anniversary edition of Snoop Dogg's *Doggystyle*, while dropping a new Usher album two days before his Super Bowl halftime show performance.

BEING INDIE MEANS "Rolling up our sleeves and accomplishing big things with gut, grit and ingenuity. We are more nimble than the big guys." —*Pryor*

CHRIS TAYLOR
President/CEO, MNRK Music Group

Taylor highlights the label's work on The Lumineers' fourth studio album, *Brightside*, which debuted at No. 6 on the Billboard 200 upon its 2022 release and has accumulated 486,000 album consumption units in the United States. Taylor says MNRK just wrapped up its work on the "amazing campaign" for the release, adding, "We have recently re-signed with the group, and we are planning their fifth album now."

BEING INDIE MEANS "Betting, and winning, on underdogs and not being beholden to pushing tonnage every day."

ABEL "THE WEEKND" TESFAYE
Founder, XO Records
WASSIM "SAL" SLAIBY
Co-founder/CEO, XO
AMIR "CASH" ESMAILIAN
LaMAR C. TAYLOR
Co-founders, XO
MELISSA MAHOOD
GM, XO Records

While the XO roster, which includes The Weeknd, Metro Boomin and Bebe Rexha, "continues to break and set new records constantly," Mahood says, "the spirit of giving back to the community is always at the forefront of what we do." That includes the XO Humanitarian Fund, which Mahood says has raised and donated more than $6 million for families facing famine in Ethiopia and Gaza. In April, The Weeknd pledged $2 million from this fund to provide over 1,500 metric tons of fortified wheat flour to the World Food Programme's response efforts in the Gaza Strip.

BIGGEST ISSUE "Indies are often bought or taken over by major corporations, while technology such as AI can often be misused and replace human heart and soul. The independent spirit and tenacity is at risk as automation is encouraged and implemented across the industry." —*Mahood*

PIERRE "P" THOMAS
CEO, Quality Control Music
KEVIN "COACH K" LEE
COO, Quality Control Music

With its own label, studio, publishing company and management firm, Quality Control opted to handle most affairs in-house, only tapping external partners like 300 Entertainment and, later, Motown for bigger marketing and radio pushes. The system worked. The Atlanta-based independent media company minted a bevy of stars including Migos, Lil Baby and City Girls and exported numerous hits over its decade-plus run. But in 2023, Thomas and Lee charted a new course and sold Quality Control to HYBE America, the U.S. subsidiary of Korean entertainment juggernaut HYBE. True to form, though, the pair retained control of the company to ensure the quality remains.

ANTHONY "TOP DAWG" TIFFITH
Founder/CEO, Top Dawg Entertainment

Over the past decade, TDE has become the premier purveyor of inimitable Black music — and it has remained so even with the departure of its rap megastar, Kendrick Lamar. The standout story now, of course, is singer-songwriter SZA, who dropped a wallop of an album at the end of 2022 with *SOS* and landed the most nominations of any artist for the 2024 Grammys, taking home three of the nine for which she contended. Elsewhere, the house that Top built steered the March release of ScHoolboy Q's sixth album, *Blue Lips*, which has been a critical success; many are calling it the South Central rapper's best project. However, it's signing new acts like rapper Doechii — *Billboard*'s Rising Star honoree at 2023's Women in Music event — that proves Tiffith's vision is just as clear as it was 20 years ago.

ANGELO TORRES
President, The Wave Music Group/Top Floor Talent

Torres divides his time between his indie label, The Wave Music Group — in partnership with Caleb Calloway — and his management company, Top Floor Talent, and has found success with both. Wave is home to exciting new talent Young Miko, who was honored at *Billboard*'s 2024 Women in Music event, opened for Karol G, collaborated with top names in Latin music including Bad Bunny and whose debut album, *att.*, landed at No. 9 on the Top Latin Albums chart. At Top Floor, Torres works with up-and-coming singer-songwriter Mariangela and rapper Álvaro Díaz. "This year, [Díaz] co-headlined Mexico's most prestigious festival, Ceremonia," he says. "I'm very proud of what we've accomplished together and what's to come."

BIGGEST ISSUE "Some DSPs paying more to deliver music on specific formats that are not traditional, which puts an extra financial burden on labels with limited resources, while others opt to eliminate payouts to artists and labels that don't generate 'x' amount of streams per year."

billboard 2024

INDIE POWER PLAYERS

CONGRATULATIONS

Ghazi Shami
Founder/CEO

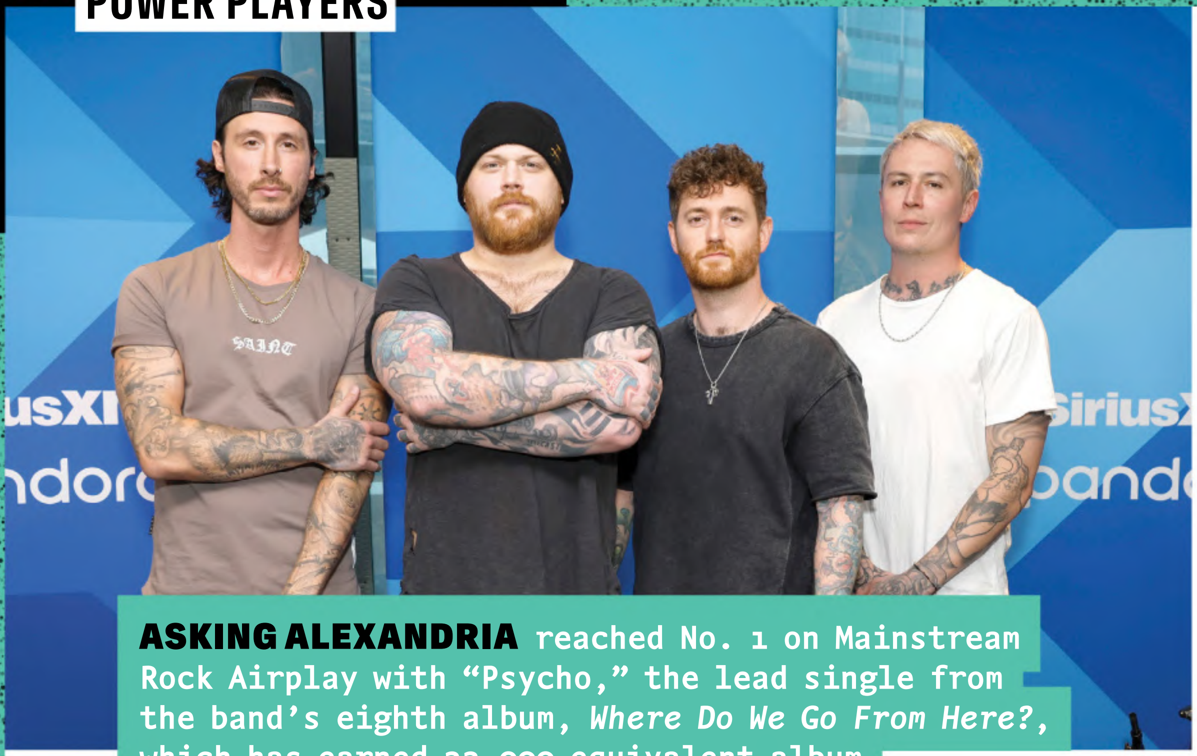
Nima Etminan
COO

Tina Davis
President

Peter Kadin
SVP Marketing

Suhel Nafar
Head of WANA

EMPIRE



ASKING ALEXANDRIA reached No. 1 on Mainstream Rock Airplay with "Psycho," the lead single from the band's eighth album, *Where Do We Go From Here?*, which has earned 33,000 equivalent album units since its August 2023 release.

JASON KEMPIN/GETTY IMAGES

DARIUS VAN ARMAN
CEO, Secretly Distribution

CHRIS WELZ
COO, Secretly Distribution

Expansion was a defining factor for Secretly Distribution this past year, with the company opening a 90,000-square-foot warehouse at its Bloomington, Ind., headquarters, bringing in new partners including London-based labels Chrysalis Music and Moshi Moshi and acquiring the catalogs of artists David Gray and Madlib. These additions, along with a preexisting roster that includes Secretly Group's labels Jagjaguwar and Secretly Canadian and more than 200 other imprints, helped the company surpass $100 million in annual revenue and bolstered what Welz calls its "global mission." **BIGGEST ISSUE** "Putting human artists and the companies that support them in the best possible position to succeed." *—Welz*

PIETER VAN RIJN
CEO, Downtown Music

BEN PATTERSON
President of artist and label services, Downtown Music Services

SCOTT WILLIAMS
President, CD Baby

CHRISTIAAN KRÖNER
President, FUGA

In 2023, Downtown "completed the final phase of a comprehensive integration aligning all of our companies as a unified group," van Rijn says, noting that 30% of all Grammy winners in 2024 worked with the company in some capacity. That reorganization makes it better equipped to navigate what van Rijn calls "a point of radical transformation" in the music industry, as AI technology becomes more popular and "opportunities for independent creators to make music and engage with their audiences" keep expanding. "As the music ecosystem continues to grow," van Rijn says, "we must anticipate the challenges that growth creates." **BEING INDIE MEANS** "Creating and supporting opportunities for independent artists and businesses to make their own choices about how they wish to work and having the best options for flexibility and service quality while retaining rights and autonomy." *—van Rijn*

DAN WAITE
CEO, Better Noise

Better Noise has continued to cement its status as a leader in rock by signing acts such as The Funeral Portrait, The Rasmus and Solence, Waite says, while label chairman Allen Kovac used a partial catalog sale to fund label acquisitions and a global expansion of its staff. "We are developing The Funeral Portrait and will break them like we did with Nothing More, Bad Wolves and From Ashes to New," he adds, noting the label has "[given] Asking Alexandria their first two No. 1 hits of their long career." **BEING INDIE MEANS** "We can focus on an artist and develop them in the way that you can't do if you have shareholders to account to quarterly. We have the staff and the roster size that allows us to support bands and work a full project and beyond, not just pump out music and hope it sticks."

JACK WHITE
Owner, Third Man Records

Third Man Records is, according to White, "a world unto itself." And while that world already includes a label, book publisher, pressing plant and school band recording programs, it recently expanded to include Third Man Hardware, which makes "strange" and innovative effects pedals and equipment. "It takes a large, talented team to make a Hollywood film, even with an amazing auteur director," White says. "It's no different for making an album or a music career, and even some of the best DIY artists can't be expected to do it all themselves. That's where labels can and should help artists." **BEING INDIE MEANS** "Commitment to art that doesn't have to cater first and foremost to the almighty dollar and popularity concerns — though at some point, indie labels have to figure out how to pay the bills, too. That's where art and commerce merge."

ALEX WILHELM
Founder/Owner, 16 Entertainment

16 Entertainment is more than just a distribution company, having spent the last few years since Wilhelm left the major-label system meeting artists where they are and providing support from streaming strategy to label services to artist development to negotiation advice to, yes, distribution. "We've already hit 5 billion streams, providing an empowering alternative to independent-minded artists," says Wilhelm, who has worked with acts such as Hotel Ugly, Violent Vira and TV Girl during that period. **BEING INDIE MEANS** "Amplifying artists who are authentic and bold."

BRYAN "BIRDMAN" WILLIAMS
RONALD "SLIM" WILLIAMS
Co-founders/co-CEOs, Cash Money Records

Continuing to guide their legendary label to its next successful chapter penned by R&B singer-songwriter Jacquees and rappers Eighty8, Onsight Deeda and Saxkboy KD, the Crescent City natives received keys to their beloved hometown of New Orleans earlier this year as the mayor commended their "contributions to music and commitment to the community." Recently selected to participate in YouTube's Leaders & Legends initiative, Ronald notes that for him and his brother, the bottom line is still about "having the freedom we've always had: to sign artists we want and work with artists we choose to work with."

EMMANUEL ZUNZ
Founder/CEO, ONErpm

"ONErpm has evolved from its roots as a distribution company into an artist-centric, multifaceted modern music record label," Zunz says. That has recently included hitting revenue milestones, bolstering its global market share and scoring chart hits in countries from Nigeria to Argentina to Turkey. Zunz credits the company's myriad successes to "both the quality of ONErpm's artists, as well as the support ONErpm's global marketing and A&R teams provide." And ONErpm keeps expanding its offerings with the additions of financial and accounting software ONErpm Enterprise Solutions and DIY distribution company OFFStep. **BIGGEST ISSUE** "Consolidation. New entrants will need to build sustainable business models rather than rely on additional third-party investment if they want to be relevant in the years to come." b

CONTRIBUTORS

TREVOR ANDERSON, RANIA ANIFTOS, KATIE BAIN, DAVE BROOKS, ERIC RENNER BROWN, ANNA CHAN, ED CHRISTMAN, LEILA COBO, HANNAH DAILEY, STEPHEN DAW, ELIZABETH DILTS MARSHALL, CHRIS EGGERTSEN, GRISELDA FLORES, PAUL GREIN, LYNDSEY HAVENS, GIL KAUFMAN, STEVE KNOPPER, CARL LAMARRE, ELIAS LEIGHT, JASON LIPSHUTZ, JOE LYNCH, HERAN MAMO, TAYLOR MIMS, GAIL MITCHELL, JESSICA NICHOLSON, GLENN PEOPLES, SIGAL RATNER-ARIAS, ISABELA RAYGOZA, KRISTIN ROBINSON, JESSICA ROIZ, DAN RYS, DAMIEN SCOTT, ANDREW UNTERBERGER

METHODOLOGY Record companies are defined as independent by their ownership through entities other than the three major music groups. Distributors, regardless of their corporate ownership, qualify as independent through the repertoire they market. Companies self-certify they meet these criteria in submitting nominations. Nominations for all of *Billboard*'s industry-sourced executive lists open no less than 150 days in advance of publication, and a submission link is sent by request before the nomination period. (Please email thom.duffy@billboard.com for inclusion on the email list for nomination links and for how to obtain an editorial calendar.) *Billboard*'s 2024 Indie Power Players were nominated by their companies and chosen by editors based on factors including market share as measured by *Billboard* charts, using data available as of March 30. Career trajectory and momentum were also considered. Where required, U.S. record-label market share was consulted using Luminate's current market share for albums, plus track-equivalent and streaming-equivalent album consumption.

tuneCORE

$4 BILLION EARNED BY TUNECORE ARTISTS WORLDWIDE

"It is with great pride and admiration that we celebrate TuneCore's independent artists collectively surpassing $4 billion earned since the company was founded in 2006. Independent artists stand at the forefront of innovation in music, both as pioneers of experimentation and as the trailblazers forging new paths to success in the music industry, and TuneCore applauds their achievements!"

ANDREEA GLEESON
CEO, TuneCore
2024 Billboard Indie Power Player

Congratulations

to all of our

2024

Independent Power Players

DOWNTOWN

The Music Industry Lives Here

players

CELEBRATING MUSIC'S MOVERS

Among the top nominees at the Libera Awards are Killer Mike, Mitski and Polachek (from left).

HONORING THE FINEST IN INDIE MUSIC

A2IM's 2024 Libera Awards celebrate excellence across genres

WHEN THE 13TH ANNUAL Libera Awards take place June 10 at Gotham Hall in New York, the event will fete the finest in independent music at a time when the indie industry has never been stronger.

The awards show will kick off the American Association of Independent Music's Indie Week, which begins June 10 and includes three days of keynotes, workshops and panels June 11-13.

On June 11, A2IM will partner with *Billboard* to honor this year's 2024 Indie Power Players (see story, page 46).

A2IM is a not-for-profit trade association that represents indie-music recording owners and advocates for music owners on a policy level to ensure fair compensation for their work.

At this year's Libera Awards, Killer Mike, Caroline Polachek, Mitski, L'Rain and Wednesday are among the year's most nominated artists.

Presented by Merlin, the awards feature 38 categories honoring the best in independent music, including three new categories: best record from games and interactive media, publisher of the year and distributor of the year.

"Huge congratulations to all our talented and accomplished nominees," A2IM president/CEO Dr. Richard James Burgess says. The ceremony is "the world's largest awards show for the diverse universe of independent music, and this year's event will be the biggest and best to date."

Louis Posen, founder of Hopeless Records, which is marking its 30th anniversary, will be honored with the 2024 lifetime achievement award, "recognizing his exceptional contributions, accomplishments, philanthropy and outstanding leadership in the independent sector," according to an A2IM statement.

New York-based stand-up comedian/musician Marcia Belsky will host the awards, which will feature performances by Christian McBride's New Jawn quartet, classical pianist Lara Downes, Latin artist Pachyman, rapper Kari Faux, New York trio Fcukers and pop-rock artist LØLØ.

Following is the full list of Libera Award nominees.

—THOM DUFFY

RECORD OF THE YEAR

- **L'RAIN,** ***I Killed Your Dog*** (Mexican Summer)
- **KILLER MIKE,** ***MICHAEL*** (Loma Vista Recordings)
- **MITSKI,** ***The Land Is Inhospitable and So Are We*** (Dead Oceans)
- **CAROLINE POLACHEK,** ***Desire, I Want To Turn Into You*** (Perpetual Novice)
- **WEDNESDAY,** ***Rat Saw God*** (Dead Oceans)

LABEL OF THE YEAR (15 OR MORE EMPLOYEES)

- **DEAD OCEANS**
- **DOMINO RECORDING COMPANY**
- **HOPELESS RECORDS**
- **MATADOR RECORDS**
- **MERGE RECORDS**
- **PARTISAN RECORDS**
- **SUB POP RECORDS**
- **THIRD MAN RECORDS**

LABEL OF THE YEAR (5 OR FEWER EMPLOYEES)

- **BASTARD JAZZ RECORDINGS**
- **BAYONET RECORDS**
- **FADER LABEL**
- **INNOVATIVE LEISURE**
- **OH BOY RECORDS**
- **TOPSHELF RECORDS**
- **TRUE PANTHER**

LABEL OF THE YEAR (6-14 EMPLOYEES)

- **CAPTURED TRACKS**
- **CITY SLANG**
- **LEX RECORDS**
- **LIGHT IN THE ATTIC**

KILLER MIKE, POLACHEK: GILBERT FLORES FOR BILLBOARD. MITSKI: CHRISTOPHER POLK FOR BILLBOARD.

ILLUSTRATION BY MAE DECENA

- MACK AVENUE MUSIC GROUP
- PHOTO FINISH RECORDS
- SADDLE CREEK

DISTRIBUTOR OF THE YEAR
- FUGA
- LIGHT IN THE ATTIC
- THE ORCHARD
- REDEYE WORLDWIDE
- SECRETLY DISTRIBUTION
- SYMPHONIC DISTRIBUTION
- VIRGIN MUSIC GROUP

PUBLISHER OF THE YEAR
- ARTS & CRAFTS MUSIC
- DOMINO PUBLISHING COMPANY
- RESERVOIR MEDIA
- RIMAS PUBLISHING
- SECRETLY PUBLISHING
- SUB POP PUBLISHING
- WARP PUBLISHING

INDEPENDENT CHAMPION PRESENTED BY MERLIN
- BANDCAMP
- DOWNTOWN MUSIC HOLDINGS
- INFINITE CATALOG
- LIGHT IN THE ATTIC
- PEANUT BUTTER WOLF
- JORGE BREA
- THIRTY TIGERS

BREAKTHROUGH ARTIST/RELEASE PRESENTED BY VIRGIN MUSIC GROUP
- BAMBII (Innovative Leisure)
- BAR ITALIA (Matador Records)
- BLONDSHELL, *Blondshell* (Partisan Records)
- INDIGO DE SOUZA, *All of This Will End* (Saddle Creek)
- SAY SHE SHE, *Silver* (Colemine Records)
- SLOW PULP (ANTI-)
- WEDNESDAY (Dead Oceans)

MUSIC VIDEO OF THE YEAR
- BLACK PUMAS, *"More Than a Love Song"* (ATO Records)
- BLONDSHELL, *"Salad"* (Partisan Records)
- INDIGO DE SOUZA, *"Younger & Dumber"* (Saddle Creek)
- GEESE, *"Cowboy Nudes"* (Partisan Records)
- IDLES, *"Dancer"* (Partisan Records)
- ARLO PARKS, *"Blades"* (Transgressive)
- SHYGIRL, *"Heaven"* (featuring Tinashe) (Because Music)

BEST ALTERNATIVE ROCK RECORD
- COURTNEY BARNETT, *End of the Day* (Mom+Pop)
- GEESE, *3D Country* (Partisan Records)
- HOTLINE TNT, *Cartwheel* (Third Man Records)
- MITSKI, *The Land Is Inhospitable and So Are We* (Dead Oceans)
- CAROLINE POLACHEK, *Desire, I Want To Turn Into You* (Perpetual Novice)
- WEDNESDAY, *Rat Saw God* (Dead Oceans)

BEST AMERICAN ROOTS RECORD
- CHARLEY CROCKETT, *The Man From Waco Redux* (Son of Davy/Thirty Tigers)
- MADI DIAZ, *"Don't Do Me Good"* (featuring Kacey Musgraves) (ANTI-)
- MJ LENDERMAN, *"Rudolph"* (ANTI-)
- HISS GOLDEN MESSENGER, *Jump for Joy* (Merge Records)
- ESTHER ROSE, *Safe To Run* (New West Records)
- ALLISON RUSSELL, *The Returner* (Fantasy Records)

BEST BLUES RECORD
- THE COUNT BASIE ORCHESTRA, *Basie Swings the Blues* (Candid Records)
- ROBERT FINLEY, *Black Bayou* (Easy Eye Sound)
- CHRISTONE "KINGFISH" INGRAM, *Live in London* (Alligator Records)
- BETTYE LaVETTE, *LaVette!* (Jay-Vee Records/MRI)
- VARIOUS ARTISTS, *Tell Everybody! 21st Century Juke Joint Blues From Easy Eye Sound* (Easy Eye Sound)
- NICK WATERHOUSE, *The Fooler* (Innovative Leisure)

BEST CLASSICAL RECORD
- CHICK COREA & ORCHESTRA DA CAMERA DELLA SARDEGNA, *Sardinia* (Candid Records)
- DOEKE, *Bewondering* (Nettwerk Music Group)
- LARA DOWNES, *Love at Last* (Pentatone)
- ERIK HALL, *Canto Ostinato* (Western Vinyl)
- HAUSCHKA, *Philanthropy* (City Slang)
- WILL LIVERMAN, *The Dunbar/Moore Sessions: Vol. I* (Lexicon Classics)
- KELLY MORAN, *Vesela* (Warp Records)
- CHICK COREA & ORCHESTRA DA CAMERA DELLA SARDEGNA, *"Mozart Concerto No. 24 C Minor - K.491: II Larghetto"* (Candid Records)

BEST COUNTRY RECORD
- MYA BYRNE, *Rhinestone Tomboy* (Kill Rock Stars)
- COLBIE CAILLAT, *Along the Way* (Blue Jean Baby Records/Downtown Artist & Label Services)
- THE PINK STONES, *You Know Who* (Normaltown Records)
- MARGO PRICE, *Strays* (Loma Vista Recordings)
- TANYA TUCKER, *Sweet Western Sound* (Fantasy Records)
- TURNPIKE TROUBADOURS, *A Cat in the Rain* (Bossier City Records/Thirty Tigers)

BEST DANCE RECORD
- ALUNA, *Mycelium* (Mad Decent)
- BRAXE + FALCON, *Step by Step (Remixes)* (Smugglers Way/Domino Recording Company)
- JAYDA G, *Guy* (Ninja Tune)
- LP GIOBBI, *Light Places* (Counter Records/Ninja Tune)
- PEGGY GOU, *"(It Goes Like) Nanana"* (XL Recordings)
- HUDSON MOHAWKE & NIKKI NAIR, *Set the Roof* (Warp Records)
- ROMY, *Mid Air* (Young)

BEST ELECTRONIC RECORD
- FLOATING POINTS, *"Birth4000"* (Ninja Tune)
- SOFIA KOURTESIS, *Madres* (Ninja Tune)
- LITTLE DRAGON, *Slugs of Love* (Ninja Tune)
- ODESZA, *Yellow House, Flaws in Our Design* (Foreign Family Collective/Ninja Tune)
- OVERMONO, *Good Lies* (XL Recordings)
- DJ SHADOW, *Action Adventure* (Mass Appeal)
- YAEJI, *With a Hammer* (XL Recordings)

Top left: Burgess. Bottom left: Posen. Above: Bebel Gilberto has been nominated for best Latin record for *João*.

BEST FOLK RECORD
- JULIE BYRNE, *The Greater Wings* (Ghostly International)
- LAURA JANE GRACE, *"Dysphoria Hoodie"* (Polyvinyl Record Co.)
- KARA JACKSON, *Why Does the Earth Give Us People To Love?* (September Recordings)
- AOIFE O'DONOVAN, *Age of Apathy Solo Sessions* (Yep Roc Records)
- ANDY SHAUF, *Norm* (ANTI-)
- SUFJAN STEVENS, *Javelin* (Asthmatic Kitty Records)
- SUNNY WAR, *Anarchist Gospel* (New West Records)

BEST GLOBAL RECORD PRESENTED BY REDEYE WORLDWIDE
- ALTIN GÜN, *Ask* (ATO Records)
- ASAKE, *Work of Art* (YBNL Nation/EMPIRE)
- BOMBINO, *Sahel* (Partisan Records)
- PACHYMAN, *Switched-On* (ATO Records)
- SAMPA THE GREAT, *As Above, So Below (Deluxe)* (Loma Vista Recordings)
- WITCH, *Zango* (Desert Daze Sound)

BEST HEAVY RECORD
- BEARTOOTH, *The Surface* (Red Bull Records)
- THE CALLOUS DAOBOYS, *God Smiles Upon the Callous Daoboys* (MNRK Music Group)
- FROM ASHES TO NEW, *Blackout* (Better Noise Music)
- FUCKED UP, *One Day* (Merge Records)
- MODEL/ACTRIZ, *Dogsbody* (True Panther)
- SOUL GLO, *"If I Speak (Shut the Fuck Up)"* (Epitaph)
- ZULU, *A New Tomorrow* (Flatspot Records)

BEST HIP-HOP/RAP RECORD
- AESOP ROCK, *Integrated Tech Solutions* (Rhymesayers Entertainment)
- ATMOSPHERE, *So Many Other Realities Exist Simultaneously* (Rhymesayers Entertainment)
- DANNY BROWN, *Quaranta* (Warp Records)
- CONWAY THE MACHINE, *Won't He Do It* (Drumwork Music Group/EMPIRE)
- McKINLEY DIXON, *Beloved! Paradise! Jazz!?* (City Slang)
- KARI FAUX, *Real B*tches Don't Die!* (drink sum wtr)
- KILLER MIKE, *MICHAEL* (Loma Vista Recordings)
- BILLY WOODS, KENNY SEGAL, *Maps* (Backwoodz Studios/Fat Possum Records)

BEST JAZZ RECORD
- JOEY ALEXANDER, *Continuance* (Mack Avenue Music Group)

BURGESS: DAN BASSINI. POSEN: JORDAN KELSEY KNIGHT. GILBERTO: SERGIONE INFUSO/CORBIS/GETTY IMAGES.

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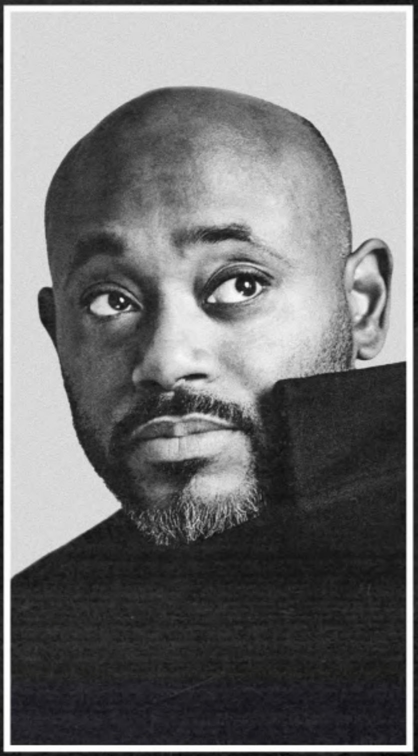
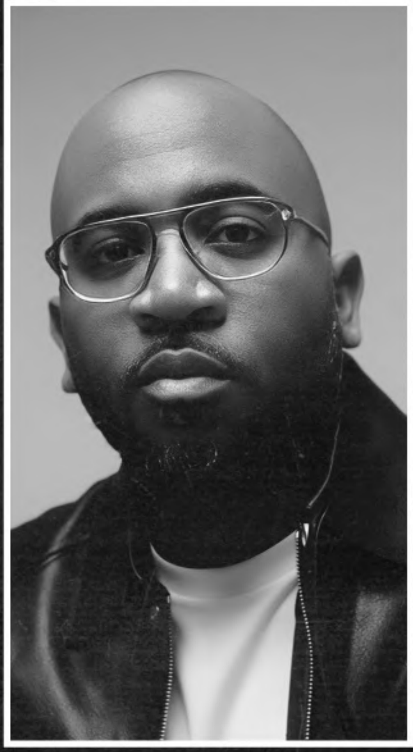


STEVE STOUTE



DAVID MELHADO

MIKE WEISS

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players

- **LOUIS COLE,** *Some Unused Songs* (Brainfeeder)
- **SAM GENDEL & MARCELLA CYTRYNOWICZ,** *Audiobook* (Psychic Hotline)
- **ROBERT GLASPER,** *In December* (Loma Vista Recordings)
- **JOHN CARROLL KIRBY,** *Blowout* (Stones Throw Records)
- **CHRISTIAN McBRIDE'S NEW JAWN,** *Prime* (Mack Avenue Music Group)

BEST LATIN RECORD

- **EL BÚHO,** *Strata* (Wonderwheel Recordings)
- **BEBEL GILBERTO,** *João* ([PIAS])
- **HELADO NEGRO,** *"LFO (Lupe Finds Oliveros)"* (4AD)
- **CARLA MORRISON,** *"Todo Fue por Amor (de la película "Con Esta Luz")"* (Cosmica Artists)
- **PAHUA,** *Habita* (Nacional Records)
- **TAGUA TAGUA,** *Tanto* (Wonderwheel Recordings)

BEST OUTLIER RECORD

- **ANJIMILE,** *The King* (4AD)
- **ANOHNI,** *My Back Was a Bridge for You To Cross* (Secretly Canadian)
- **KHRUANGBIN,** *Live at Sydney Opera House* (Dead Oceans)
- **L'RAIN,** *I Killed Your Dog* (Mexican Summer)
- **TIRZAH,** *trip9love...???* (Domino Recording Company)
- **YEULE,** *softscars* (Ninja Tune)

BEST POP RECORD

- **BELLE AND SEBASTIAN,** *Late Developers* (Matador Records)
- **CHAI,** *CHAI* (Sub Pop Records)
- **BECCA MANCARI,** *Left Hand* (Captured Tracks)
- **SAMIA,** *Honey* (Grand Jury Music)
- **SUKI WATERHOUSE,** *"To Love"* (Sub Pop Records)

BEST PUNK RECORD

- **CIVIC,** *Taken by Force* (ATO Records)
- **MANNEQUIN PUSSY,** *"I Got Heaven"* (Epitaph)
- **NECK DEEP,** *"Take Me With You"* (Hopeless Records)
- **SCOWL,** *Psychic Dance Routine* (Flatspot Records)
- **SNÕÕPER,** *Super Snõõper* (Third Man Records)
- **SOUL GLO,** *"If I Speak (Shut the Fuck Up)"* (Epitaph)

BEST R&B RECORD

- **EMILY KING,** *Special Occasion* (ATO Records)
- **SAMPHA,** *Lahai* (Young)
- **EMELI SANDÉ,** *How Were We To Know* (Chrysalis Records)
- **JORJA SMITH,** *falling or flying* (FAMM Limited)
- **CLEO SOL,** *Gold* (Forever Living Originals/TuneCore)
- **JAMILA WOODS,** *Water Made Us* (Jagjaguwar)

BEST RECORD FROM GAMES AND INTERACTIVE MEDIA

- **JON EVERIST,** *The Lamplighters League Original Soundtrack* (Lakeshore Records)
- **HEALTH,** *"HATEFUL"* (Loma Vista Recordings)
- **MR. SAUCEMAN, CLASCYJITTO, POST ELVIS,** *Pizza Tower* (Materia Collective)
- **MATT CREAMER, RETROWARE, PROFESSOR SHYGUY FEATURING NUR-D,** *Prison City Original Soundtrack* (Screenwave Media)

BEST REISSUE

- **CYMANDE,** *Cymande* (Partisan Records)
- **DE LA SOUL,** *3 Feet High & Rising* (AOI Records/Chrysalis Records)
- **THE EXPLODING HEARTS,** *Guitar Romantic (Expanded and Remastered)* (Third Man Records)
- **JERRY GARCIA,** *Might as Well: A Round Records Retrospective* (Round Records)
- **JASON ISBELL,** *Southeastern* (Southeastern Records/Thirty Tigers)
- **NEUTRAL MILK HOTEL,** *The Collected Works of Neutral Milk Hotel* (Merge Records)

BEST REMIX

- **SUDAN ARCHIVES, ODESZA,** *"Selfish Soul"* (ODESZA Remix) (Stones Throw Records under exclusive license to Foreign Family Collective/Ninja Tune)
- **CHRISTINE AND THE QUEENS,** *"To Be Honest"* (SG Lewis Remix) (Because Music)
- **JOHN SUMMIT, DEADMAU5, KASKADE,** *"I Remember"* (John Summit Remix) (mau5trap)
- **JERRY GARCIA & LP GIOBBI,** *Garcia (Remixed)* (Round Records)
- **MARGO PRICE,** *"Change of Heart"* (featuring Sierra Ferrell) (Loma Vista Recordings)

BEST ROCK RECORD

- **BE YOUR OWN PET,** *Mommy* (Third Man Records)
- **BLONDSHELL,** *Blondshell* (Partisan Records)
- **JASON ISBELL AND THE 400 UNIT,** *Weathervanes* (Southeastern Records)
- **MANCHESTER ORCHESTRA,** *The Valley of Vision* (Loma Vista Recordings)
- **THE NATIONAL,** *First Two Pages of Frankenstein* (4AD)
- **QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE,** *In Times New Roman...* (Matador Records)
- **RATBOYS,** *The Window* (Topshelf Records)

BEST SHORT-FORM VIDEO

- **BLONDSHELL,** *"Kiss City" Reel* (Partisan Records)
- **DE LA SOUL,** *Tribute to Dave* (AOI Records/Chrysalis Records)
- **IDLES,** *"Grace" teaser* (Partisan Records)
- **JOHN CARROLL KIRBY,** *"Oropendola"* (Stones Throw Records)
- **MITSKI,** *The Land Is Inhospitable and So Are We* (Dead Oceans)

BEST SINGER-SONGWRITER RECORD

- **INDIGO DE SOUZA,** *All of This Will End* (Saddle Creek)
- **MADI DIAZ,** *"Same Risk"* (ANTI-)
- **ANGEL OLSEN,** *Forever Means* (Jagjaguwar)
- **JESS WILLIAMSON,** *Time Ain't Accidental* (Mexican Summer)
- **JENNY OWEN YOUNGS,** *Avalanche* (Yep Roc Records)

BEST SOUL/FUNK RECORD

- **BETTY DAVIS,** *Crashin' From Passion* (Light in the Attic)
- **BLACK PUMAS,** *Chronicles of a Diamond* (ATO Records)

Blind Boys of Alabama have been nominated for best spiritual record for *Echoes of the South*.

The *Oh Boy Singles Box Set*, a collection of recordings by the late John Prine, has been nominated for best creative packaging.

- **ROBERT FINLEY,** *Black Bayou* (Easy Eye Sound)
- **NEAL FRANCIS,** *Francis Comes Alive* (ATO Records)
- **SAY SHE SHE,** *Silver* (Colemine Records)

BEST SPIRITUAL RECORD

- **BLIND BOYS OF ALABAMA,** *Echoes of the South* (Single Lock Records)
- **LECRAE, TASHA COBBS LEONARD,** *"Your Power"* (Reach Records)
- **KATY NICHOLE,** *Jesus Changed My Life* (Centricity Music)
- **J ROCC,** *Beatitudes* (Stones Throw Records)
- **LORI VAMBE,** *Space-Time Dreamtime* (STRUT)

BEST SYNC USAGE

- **CAT POWER,** *cover of Rihanna's "Stay" in A24's Past Lives trailer* (Domino Recording Company)
- **BRITTANY HOWARD FEATURING CHILDISH GAMBINO,** *"Stay High" in You People* (ATO Records)
- **REFUSED,** *"New Noise" in The Bear (Season 2)* (Epitaph)
- **SHARON VAN ETTEN,** *"Anything" in Priscilla trailer* (Jagjaguwar)
- **NILÜFER YANYA,** *"Midnight Sun" in The Boogeyman* (ATO Records)

CREATIVE PACKAGING

- **APHEX TWIN,** *Blackbox Life Recorder 21f/in a room7 F760* (Warp Records)
- **DE LA SOUL,** *3 Feet High & Rising* (AOI Records/Chrysalis Records)
- **JERRY GARCIA,** *Heads and Tails: Vol. 1* (Round Records)
- **NEUTRAL MILK HOTEL,** *The Collected Works of Neutral Milk Hotel* (Merge Records)
- **JOHN PRINE,** *The Oh Boy Singles Box Set* (Oh Boy Records)
- **VARIOUS ARTISTS,** *Sub Pop Singles Club Vol. 8* (Sub Pop Records)

MARKETING GENIUS

- **BLONDE REDHEAD,** *Sit Down for Dinner* (section1)
- **BLONDSHELL,** *Blondshell* (Partisan Records)
- **DE LA SOUL,** *De La Soul catalog release* (AOI Records/Chrysalis Records)
- **PEGGY GOU,** *"(It Goes Like) Nanana"* (XL Recordings)
- **KILLER MIKE,** *MICHAEL* (Loma Vista Recordings)
- **MITSKI,** *The Land Is Inhospitable and So Are We* (Dead Oceans)

SELF-RELEASED RECORD OF THE YEAR

- **LAUREL HALO,** *Atlas* (Awe)
- **L'QUEER,** *"Fuck Ron DeSantis"* (L'Queer)
- **MICHIGANDER,** *It Will Never Be the Same* (C3 Records)
- **PARIS TEXAS,** *MID AIR* (Paris Texas)
- **CAROLINE POLACHEK,** *Desire, I Want To Turn Into You* (Perpetual Novice)
- **TENACIOUS D,** *"Video Games"* (Tenacious D)

BLIND BOYS: JASON ARMOND/LOS ANGELES TIMES/GETTY IMAGES. PRINE: TOM HILL/GETTY IMAGES.

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billboard

2024

PRIDE ISSUE

On June 22, *Billboard* will publish its sixth annual Pride Issue, honoring culturally moving and influential people who have contributed to the community's history and its current landscape. Year-round, *Billboard* covers LGBTQIA+ issues across our editorial channels, including Billboard Pride. Building on this platform, *Billboard* will dedicate the month of June to celebrate love, acceptance, diversity and what it means to be queer in music.

All month long, *Billboard* will be the go-to destination for music- and entertainment-related Pride content. Leveraging our iconic voice within music and culture, *Billboard* will curate a mix of engaging video and social content featuring thought-provoking panels, heartfelt performances and glam tutorials — all in the spirit of building a community for consumers and influencers in celebration of Pride.

CONTACT

East Coast/Midwest: Joe Maimone | joe.maimone@billboard.com
Southeast: Lee Ann Photoglo | laphotoglo@gmail.com
Latin: Marcia Olival | marciaolival29@gmail.com
Touring/West Coast: Cynthia Mellow | cmellow615@gmail.com
International: Ryan O'Donnell | rodonnell@pmc.com

ISSUE DATE 6/22 | AD CLOSE 6/11 | MATERIALS DUE 6/13

BONUS DISTRIBUTION

11,000+ GRAMMY® Voters will be mailed a copy of this special issue

NEW

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GRAMMY FIRST LOOK

On July 13, *Billboard* will publish a GRAMMY First Look special feature showcasing the artists, producers and other creative professionals whose music was released from September 16, 2023 – August 30, 2024 and look at the early contenders for the 67th GRAMMY Awards® in the categories of Record Of The Year, Song Of The Year, Album Of The Year and Best New Artist.

7/17/24: Online Entry Process (OEP) Opens
8/30/24: Online Entry Process (OEP) Closes

Take advantage of this early opportunity during this eligibility period to showcase accomplished work to the music industry as they prepare to cast their entries for Music's Biggest Night®.

ISSUE DATE 7/13 AD CLOSE 7/1 MATERIALS DUE 7/3

CONTACTS

Joe Maimone | joe.maimone@billboard.com **Lee Ann Photoglo** | laphotoglo@gmail.com

Cynthia Mellow | cmellow615@gmail.com **Marcia Olival** | marciaolival29@gmail.com

Ryan O'Donnell | rodonnell@pmc.com

chartbreaker

TOMMY RICHMAN

Why the elusive newcomer says his breakout hit is “the start of a run”

BY CARL LAMARRE

PHOTOGRAPHED BY GUSTAVO SORIANO

Before R&B-leaning singer Tommy Richman vaulted into the mainstream, he was recording music in his mother’s basement. An ardent supporter of her son’s career, she would often tell him her favorite songs of his — and his breakthrough hit wasn’t one of them. “ ‘Million Dollar Baby?’ That’s the one everybody likes?” Richman playfully teases over Zoom, mirroring her reaction. But while his mother may not be captivated by the ’80s funk-inspired track, the rest of the country has been propelling Richman to a top five Billboard Hot 100 hit.

Born in Woodbridge, Va., Richman, 24, grew up listening to 50 Cent and Lil Wayne. As a college freshman, he uploaded his somber single “Pleasantville” to YouTube and spammed the comments section of other videos with links to his own, urging listeners to “be brutally honest.” The positive feedback he received online — including from Drake — encouraged Richman to chase music as a full-time career. Meeting Darren Xu, COO of Brent Faiyaz’s ISO Supremacy imprint, was pivotal in making that happen. Xu, whom he met in 2022, signed on to manage the rising artist — and soon after connected Richman with Faiyaz, who signed Richman to a record deal with ISO Supremacy in partnership with PULSE Music Group in August. “[My team] values me as a person,” Richman says. “A lot of people look at you as an object: ‘We have to stay around this guy because he makes good songs.’ This shit wouldn’t have really transpired like that if we didn’t get along as people.”

Richman started 2024 with two singles, but on April 13, when he teased what would ultimately become his breakout hit, there was a perceptible shift in response. Shot in a grainy VHS style and featuring himself and his friends grooving to the infectious beat and falsetto chorus of “Million Dollar Baby” in the studio, the social media clip went viral, garnering over 12.1 million views on TikTok alone. “It was the combination of the sound of the VHS camera, the vibe of the people in the studio, how short the snippet was and how in your face the audio was,” he says. “The audio is really loud. I think that’s why it caught on.”

He followed it with a few more clips — and, according to PULSE Music Group vp of marketing Sara Ahmed, they decided to drop the song just four days before its April 26 release. (Richman turned in the master recording just three days prior at 1 a.m.) Despite the short lead time for a rollout campaign, the hit had a seismic debut, racking in 38 million official U.S. streams in its first full tracking week (April 26-May 2), according to Luminate. It entered at No. 2 on the Billboard Hot 100 and atop the Streaming Songs, Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs and Hot R&B Songs charts — a particularly notable feat, given the track was released amid the culture-dominating hip-hop battle between Drake and Kendrick Lamar. “It was a blessing, low key,” Richman says. “A lot of people looked at us like we were the palate cleanse.”

Now, as Richman savors his newfound success, he’s already chipping away at his debut album, *Coyote*. Though he doesn’t have a release date, he believes the project will showcase his artistry beyond being a one-hit wonder. “This is a big record,” he says, “but this shit doesn’t define me ... This is the start of a run.”

No. 2

PEAK ON *BILLBOARD’S* HOT 100 CHART

Richman photographed May 23 in Los Angeles.

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